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# A FAIR JEWESS.

BY

B. L. FARJEON,

*Author of "The Last Tenant," Etc.*

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# A FAIR JEWESS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE POOR DOCTOR.

ON a bright, snowy night in December, some years ago, Dr. Spenlove, having been employed all the afternoon and evening in paying farewell visits to his patients, walked briskly toward his home through the narrowest and most squalid thoroughfares in Portsmouth.

The animation of his movements may be set down to the severity of the weather, and not to any inward cheerfulness of spirits, for as he passed familiar landmarks he looked at them with a certain regret which men devoid of sentiment would have pronounced an indication of a weak nature. In this opinion, however, they would have been wrong, for Dr. Spenlove's intended departure early the following morning from a field which had strong claims upon his sympathies was dictated by a law of inexorable necessity. He was a practitioner of considerable skill, and he had conscientiously striven to achieve a reputation in some measure commensurate with his abilities.

*From a worldly point of view his efforts had been*

attended with mortifying failure; he had not only been unsuccessful in earning a bare livelihood, but he had completely exhausted the limited resources with which he had started upon his career; he had, moreover, endured severe privation, and an opening presenting itself in the wider field of London he had accepted it with gladness and reluctance. With gladness because he was an ambitious man, and had desires apart from his profession; with reluctance because it pained him to bid farewell to patients in whom he took a genuine interest, and whom he would have liked to continue to befriend. He had, indeed, assisted many of them to the full extent of his power, and in some instances had gone beyond this limit, depriving himself of the necessities of life to supply them with medicines and nourishing food, and robbing his nights of rest to minister to their woes. He bore about him distinguishing marks of the beautiful self-sacrifice.

On this last night of his residence among them his purse was empty, and inclement as was the weather he wore, on his road home, but one thin coat which was but a feeble protection from the freezing air which pierced to his skin, though every button was put to its proper use. A hacking cough, which caused him to pause occasionally, denoted that he was running a dangerous risk in being so insufficiently clad; but he seemed to make light of this, and smiled when the paroxysm was over. In no profession can be found displayed a more noble humanity and philanthropy than in that which Dr. Spenlove practiced, and needy as he was, and narrow as had been his means from the start, his young career already afforded a striking ex-

ample of sweet and unselfish attributes. In the divine placing of human hosts the poor doctor and the poor priest shall be found marching in the van side by side.

During the whole of the day snow had been falling, and during the whole of the day Dr. Spenlove had had but one meal. He did not complain; he had been accustomed to live from hand to mouth, and well knew what it was to go to bed hungry; and there was before him the prospect of brighter times.

But cheering as was this prospect his walk home through the falling snow was saddened by the scenes he had witnessed in the course of the day, and one especially dwelt in his mind.

"Poor creature!" he mused. "What will become of her and her baby? Oh, pitiless world! Does it not contain a single human being who will hold out a helping hand?"

Before one of the poorest houses in one of the poorest streets he paused, and, admitting himself with a private latchkey, unlocked a door on the ground floor, and entered a room which faced the street. There was a wire blind to the window, on which was inscribed, "Consultations from 9 till 11 A. M." This room, with a communicating bedroom at the back, comprised his professional and private residence.

Dr. Spenlove groped in the dark for the matches, and, lighting a candle, applied a match to a fire laid with scrupulous economy in the matter of coals. As he was thus employed his landlady knocked at the door and entered.

"Is it you, Mrs. Radcliffe?" he asked, not turning *his head*.

"Yes, sir. Let me do that, please."

The paper he had lit in the grate was smoldering away without kindling the wood; the landlady knelt down, and with a skillful touch the flame leaped up. Dr. Spenlove, unbuttoning his thin coat, spread out his hands to the warmth.

"Any callers, Mrs. Radcliffe?"

"A gentleman, sir, who seemed very anxious to see you. He did not leave his name or card, but said he would call again this evening."

"Did he mention the hour?"

"Nine, sir."

Dr. Spenlove put his hand to his waistcoat pocket, and quickly withdrew it, with a smile of humor and self-pity. The landlady noticed the action, and dolefully shook her head.

"Very anxious to see me, you say, Mrs. Radcliffe?"

"Very anxious, indeed, sir. Dear, dear, you're wet through!"

"It is a bitter night," he said, coughing.

"You may well say that, sir. Bad weather for you to be out, with that nasty cough of yours."

"There are many people worse off than I am, without either fire or food."

"We all have our trials, sir. It's a hard world."

"Indeed, indeed," he said, thinking of the female patient whom he had last visited.

"Where's your overcoat, sir? I'll take it down to the kitchen; it'll dry sooner there." She looked around in vain for it.

"Never mind my overcoat, Mrs. Radcliffe."

"*But you had it on when you went out, sir!*"

"Did I? Don't trouble about it. It will dry quickly enough where it is."

He was now busily employed making a parcel of books and instruments which he had taken from different parts of the room, and which were the only articles of value belonging to himself it contained. The landlady stood for a moment or two watching his movements, and then she hurried down to her kitchen, and presently returned with a cup of hot tea. As she passed through the passage with the cup in one hand and a candle in the other she glanced at the empty umbrella stand.

"His umbrella, too, as well as his overcoat," she muttered. "The man's heart's too big for his body."

She re-entered the room.

"I've brought you a cup of tea, sir, if you don't mind taking it."

"Not at all, Mrs. Radcliffe. It is very kind of you."

He drank the tea, which warmed him through and through.

"We're all sorry at your leaving us, sir," said the lady. "There's plenty that'll miss you."

"I am sorry, too," he replied, "but when needs must, you know. I can do no good to myself or others by remaining. If the gentleman calls again ask him to wait if his business is of importance. You had better tell him I am leaving Portsmouth to-morrow morning."

With his parcel under his arm he left the house, and trudging through the snow again halted at a pawnbroker's shop, lingering a while before he entered, as sensitive men do before putting the finishing touch to a *humiliating act*. Then, shrugging his shoulders and



muttering, "I ought to be used to it by this time," he plunged into the shop, where he obtained upon his few last treasures as much as would pay his third-class fare to London and the two weeks' rent he owed his landlady. Thus safeguarded for a few hours at least, he left the shop, but instead of immediately retracing his steps to his lodgings he lingered once more irresolutely, with the air of a man who was at war with himself upon a momentous question. The sixteen shillings due to his landlady was in his pocket, and undoubtedly it was simple honesty that it should be handed over to her without hesitation. But the hapless female patient who had occupied his thoughts during the last hour was at this moment in the throes of a desperate human crisis, and dark as was the present to her suffering soul the terrors which the future held in store for her were still more agonizing. She had a young baby at her breast; she had no food in her cupboard, not a loaf of bread, not a cup of milk; she had not a friend in the world to whom she could appeal for help. She, too, was in debt to her landlord, a hard man, who was waiting for another sun to rise to thrust her and her infant into the white and pitiless streets. It would have been done to-day but for the intervention of Dr. Spenlove, who had pawned his overcoat and umbrella to buy of the poor creature's landlord a respite of twenty-four hours. The sixteen shillings due to Mrs. Radcliffe would buy her another respite for a longer term, but when this was expired there was still the hopeless future to face. Dr. Spenlove thrust aside this latter consideration, and thought only of the ineffable relief *it was in his power to bring to a heart racked with*

anguish and despair. He lost sight of the fact that the wretched woman would still be without food, and that she was too weak to work for it. Even when she was strong, and able to ply her needle throughout the whole of the day and the greater part of the night, her earnings had never exceeded six shillings a week; she had confessed as much to the good doctor, but for whose timely aid the workhouse would have been her only refuge. As he stood debating with himself the sentiment of pity was strong within him, but he could not banish the voice of justice which whispered that the money was not his to dispose of. All the people with whom he was acquainted were poor, and his landlady was as poor as the rest; he knew that she often depended upon the payment of his rent to pay her own. It might be that just now she could afford to wait a while for what was due to her; if so he would dispose of the sixteen shillings as his benevolent instincts impelled him to do; he must, however, ascertain how the land lay before he acted. It may appear strange to many fortunate persons that issues so grave and vital should hang upon a sum of money which to them would not be worth a thought, but it would be a good lesson for them to learn that opportunities are not scarce for bringing heaven's brightest sunshine to overcharged hearts by the judicious bestowal of a few small coins out of the wealth which yields them all the material comforts of life.

Having made up his mind upon the important matter, Dr. Spenlove turned homeward, and as he walked he recalled the incidents in connection with the unhappy woman in which he had played a part. She was

a stranger in the neighborhood, and had lived her lonely life in a garret for five months. No person with whom she came in contact knew anything of her or of her antecedents, and it was by chance that he became acquainted with her. Attending to his poor patients in the street in which she resided, he passed her one afternoon, and was attracted as much by her modest and ladylike appearance as by the evidence of extreme weakness which could hardly escape the observation of a man so kindly hearted as himself. He perceived at once that she was of a superior class to those among whom she moved, and he was impressed by a peculiar expression on her face when his eyes rested on her. It was the expression of a hunted woman, of one who dreaded being recognized. He made inquiries about her, but no one could give him any information concerning her, and in the press of onerous cares and duties she passed out of his mind. Some weeks later he met her again, and his first impressions were renewed and strengthened, and pity stirred his heart as he observed from her garments that she was on the downward path of poverty. It was clear that she was frightened by his observance of her, for she hurried quickly on, but physical weakness frustrated her desire to avoid him; she staggered and would have fallen had he not ran forward and caught her. Weak as she was she struggled to release herself; he kept firm hold of her, however, animated by compassion and fortified by honest intention.

"You have nothing to fear from me," he said.  
"Allow me to assist you. I am Dr. Spenlove."

It was the first time he had addressed her, but his

name was familiar to her as that of a gentleman to whom the whole neighborhood was under a debt of gratitude for numberless acts of goodness. She glanced timidly at his face, and a vague hope stirred her heart; she knew that the time was approaching when she would need such a friend. But the hope did not live long; it was crushed by a sudden fear.

"Do you know me, sir?"

"No," replied Dr. Spenlove in a cheerful tone. "You are a stranger to me, as I dare say I am to you."

"No, sir," she said; "I have heard of your kindness to many suffering people."

"Tush, tush!" he exclaimed. "A man deserves no credit for doing his duty. You feel stronger now, do you not? If you have no doctor you will allow me to come and see you. Do not hesitate; you need such advice as I can give you, and," he added gently, "I will send in my account when you are rich. Not till then, upon my honor; and meanwhile I promise to ask no questions."

"I am deeply grateful to you, sir."

From that day he attended her regularly, and she was strengthened and comforted by his considerate conduct toward her. She was known as Mrs. Turner, but it was strange if she were wife or widow that she should wear no wedding ring. As their intimacy ripened his first impression that she was a lady was confirmed, and although he was naturally curious about her history, he kept his promise by not asking her any questions which he felt it would be painful to her to answer. Even when he discovered that she was about *to become a mother* he made no inquiries concerning

the father of her unborn child. On the day he bade her farewell her baby, a girl, was two weeks old, and a dark and terrible future lay before the hapless woman. His heart bled for her, but he was powerless to help her further. Weak and despairing, she sat in her chair, with her child at her wasted breast; her dark and deep-sunken eyes seemed to be contemplating this future in hopeless terror.

"I am grieved to leave you so," he said, gazing sadly at her, "but it is out of my power to do what I would wish. Unhappily I am almost as poor as yourself. You will try to get strong, will you not?"

"I don't know," she murmured.

"Remember," he said, taking her hand, "you have a duty to perform. What will you do when you are strong?"

"I don't know."

"Nay, nay," he urged, "you must not speak so despondently. Believe me, I do not wish to force your confidence, but I have gathered from chance words you have let drop that you lived in London. I am going there to-morrow. Can I call upon any person who would be likely to assist you?"

"There is no one."

"But surely you must have some friends or relations——"

"I have none. When you leave me I shall be without a friend in the world."

"God help you!" he sighed.

"Will he?"

The question was asked in the voice of one who had *abandoned hope*, who had lost faith in human good-

ness and eternal justice, and who was tasting the bitterness of death.

Dr. Spenlove remained with her an hour, striving to cheer her, to instill hope into her heart, but his words had no effect upon her, and, indeed, he felt at times that the platitudes to which he was giving utterance were little better than mockery. Was not this woman face to face with the practical issues of life and death in their most awful aspect, and was there any other than a practical remedy for them? She asked for bread, and he was offering her a stone. It was then he went from her room, and learned the full truth from her landlord, who was only waiting till he was gone to turn her into the streets. We know by what means he bought a day's respite for her. Finally he left her, and bore away with him the darkest picture of human misery of which he had ever had experience.

## CHAPTER II.

### DR. SPENLOVE'S VISITOR.

HIS landlady, Mrs. Radcliffe, met him on the doorstep, and informed him that the gentleman who had called to see him in the afternoon had called again, and was in his room.

"A word, Mrs. Radcliffe," he said hurriedly. "I am going to ask a great favor of you. I owe you two weeks' rent."

"Yes, sir."

His heart sank within him; he divined immediately from her tone that she was in need of the money.

"Would it inconvenience you to wait a little while for it?"

"I must, sir, if you haven't got it," she replied, "but I am dreadfully hard pressed, and I reckoned on it. I'm behindhand myself, sir, and my landlord's been threatening me——"

"Say no more, Mrs. Radcliffe. Justice must be first served. I have the money; take it, for Heaven's sake. I must not rob the poor to help the poor."

He muttered the last words to himself as he thrust the sixteen shillings into her hand.

"I am so sorry, sir," said the distressed woman.

He interrupted her with, "There, there, I am ashamed that I asked you. I am sure no one has a

kinder heart than you, and I am greatly obliged to you for all the attention you have shown me while I have been in your house. The gentleman is in my room, you say——”

It was a proof of Mrs. Radcliffe's kindness of heart that there was a bright fire blazing in the room, made with her own coals, and that the lamp had been replenished with her own oil. Dr. Spenlove was grateful to her, and he inwardly acknowledged that he could not have otherwise disposed of the few shillings which he had no right to call his own. His visitor rose as he entered, a well-dressed man some forty years of age, sturdily built, with touches of gray already in his hair and beard, and with signs in his face and on his forehead indicative of a strong will.

“Dr. Spenlove?” he asked.

“That is my name.”

“Mine is Gordon. I have come to see you on a matter of great importance.”

Dr. Spenlove motioned to the chair from which his visitor had risen, and he resumed his seat; but although he had said that he had come upon a matter of great importance, he seemed to be either in no hurry to open it or to be uncertain in which way to do so, for he sat for some moments in silence, smoothing his bearded chin and studying Dr. Spenlove's face with a stern and studious intentness.

“Can you spare me half an hour of your time?” he said at length.

“Longer, if you wish,” said Dr. Spenlove.

“It may be longer if you offer no opposition to the service I wish you to render me; and perhaps it is as



well to say that I am willing and can afford to pay for the service."

Dr. Spenlove bent his head.

"It is seldom," continued Mr. Gordon, "that I make mistakes, and the reason is not far to seek. I make inquiries, I clear the ground, I resolve upon a course of action, and I pursue it to its end without deviation. I will be quite frank with you, Dr. Spenlove; I am a hard, inflexible man; thrown upon the world when I was a lad, I pushed my way to fortune; I am self-made; I can speak fair English; I have received little education, none at all in a classical way, but I possess common sense, and I make it apply to my affairs. That is better than education if a man is resolved to get along in life—as I was resolved to do. When I was a young man I said, 'I will grow rich, or I will know the reason why.' I have grown rich. I do not say it as a boast—it is only fools who boast—but I am worth to-day a solid twenty thousand a year. I make this statement merely as a proof that I am in a position to carry out a plan in which I desire your assistance and co-operation."

✦ "My dear sir," said Dr. Spenlove, who could not but perceive that his visitor was very much in earnest, "the qualities you mention are admirable in their way, but I fear you have come to the wrong man. I am a doctor, and if you do not need my professional advice——"

"Stop a moment," interrupted Mr. Gordon; "I have come to the right man, and I do not need professional advice. I am as sound as a bell, and I have never had occasion to pay a doctor's fee. I know what I am

about in the mission which brings me here. I have made inquiries concerning you, and have heard something of your career and its results; I have heard of your kindness and of the esteem in which you are held. You have influence with your patients; any counsel you might give them, apart from your prescriptions, would be received with respect and attention; and I believe I am not wrong when I say that you are to some extent a man of the world."

"To some slight extent only," corrected Dr. Spenlove, with a faint smile.

"Sufficient," proceeded Mr. Gordon, "for my purpose. You are not blind to the perils which lie before weak and helpless women—before, we will say, a woman who has no friends, who is living where she is not known, who is in a position of grave danger, who is entirely without means, and who, at the best, is unable by the work of her hands to support herself."

Dr. Spenlove looked sharply at his visitor. "You have such a woman in your mind, Mr. Gordon?"

"I have such a woman in my mind, Dr. Spenlove."

"A patient of mine?"

"A patient of yours."

There was but one who answered to this description whose future seemed so dark and hopeless. For the first time during this interview he began to be interested in his visitor. He motioned him to proceed.

"We are speaking in confidence, Dr. Spenlove."

"In perfect confidence, Mr. Gordon."

"Whether my errand here is successful or not, I ask that nothing that passes between us shall ever be *divulged to a third person.*"

"I promise it."

"I will mention the name of the woman to whom I have referred, or, at least, the name by which she is known to you. Mrs. Turner."

"You mean her no harm, sir?"

"None. I am prepared to befriend her, to save her, if my conditions are accepted."

Dr. Spenlove drew a deep breath of relief. He would go to his new field of labors with a light heart if this unhappy woman was saved.

"You have come at a critical moment," he said, "and you have accurately described the position in which she is placed. But how can my mediation or the mediation of any man be necessary in such a case? She will hail you as her savior, and the savior of her babe. Hasten to her immediately, dear sir; or perhaps you do not know where she lives, and wish me to take you to her. I am ready; do not let us lose a moment, for every moment deepens her misery."

He did not observe the frown which passed into Mr. Gordon's face at his mention of the child; he was so eager that his hat was already on his head and his hand on the handle of the door. Mr. Gordon did not rise from his chair.

"You are in too great a hurry, Dr. Spenlove. Be seated, and listen to what I have to say. You ask how your mediation can avail. I answer, in the event of her refusal to accept the conditions upon which I am ready to marry her."

"To marry her!" exclaimed Dr. Spenlove.

"To marry her," repeated Mr. Gordon. "She is not *a married woman*, and her real name need not be

divulged. When you hear the story I am about to relate, when you hear the conditions, the only conditions, on which I will consent to lift her from the degrading depths into which she has fallen, you will understand why I desire your assistance. You will be able to make clear to her the effect of her consent or refusal upon her destiny and the destiny of her child; you will be able to use arguments which are in my mind, but to which I shall not give utterance. And remember, through all, that her child is a child of shame, and that I hold out to her the only prospect of that child being brought up in a reputable way and of herself being raised to respectability."

He paused a moment or two before he opened fresh matter.

"I was a poor lad, Dr. Spenlove, without parents, without a home, and when I was fourteen years of age I was working as an errand boy in London, and keeping myself upon a wage of four shillings a week. I lost this situation through the bankruptcy of my employer, and I was not successful in obtaining another. One day I saw on the walls a bill of a vessel going to Australia, and I applied at the agent's office with a vague idea that I might obtain a passage by working aboard ship in some capacity or other. I was a strong boy—starvation agrees with some lads—and a willing boy, and it happened that one of my stamp was wanted in the cook's galley. I was engaged at a shilling a month, and I landed in Melbourne with four shillings in my pocket.

"How I lived till I became a man is neither here nor there, *but when gold was discovered I lived well, for I*

got enough to buy a share in a cattle station, which now belongs entirely to me. In 1860, being then on the highroad to fortune, I made the acquaintance of a man whom I will call Mr. Charles, and of his only child, a girl of fourteen, whom I will call Mary. I was taken with Mr. Charles, and I was taken in by him as well, for he disappeared from the colony a couple of years afterward in my debt to the tune of two thousand pounds. He had the grace to write to me from London, saying he would pay me some day, and there the matter rested for seven years more, which brings me to two years ago.

"At that time I had occasion to visit England on business, and in London I hunted up my debtor, and we renewed our acquaintance. Mary was then a young woman of twenty-one, and had it not been for her it is more than likely I might have made things unpleasant for her father, who was leading the disreputable life of a gambler on race courses and in clubs of a low character. Dr. Spenlove, you must have gathered from the insight I have given you into my character that I am not a man of sentiment, and you will probably consider it all the more strange that I should have entertained feelings toward Mary which caused me to consider whether she would not make me a creditable wife. Of these feelings I prefer not to speak in a warmer strain, but shall leave you to place your own construction upon them. While I was debating with myself as to the course I should pursue the matter was decided for me by the death of Mr. Charles. He died in disgrace and poverty, and Mary was left friendless and homeless.

"I stepped in to her rescue, and I made a proposal of marriage to her; at the same time I told her that I thought it advisable for her sake and mine that a little time should elapse before this proposal was carried into effect. I suggested that our marriage should take place in two years; meanwhile I would return to Australia, to build a suitable house and to prepare a home for her, and she would remain in England to fit herself for her new sphere of duties. She accepted me, and I arranged with a lady of refinement to receive her. To this lady both she and I were utter strangers, and it was settled between Mary and myself that she should enter her temporary home under an assumed name. It was my proposal that this pardonable deceit should be practiced; no person was wronged by it, and it would assist toward Mary's complete severance from old associations. Our future was in our own hands, and concerned nobody but ourselves.

"I returned to Australia and made my preparations. We corresponded once a month, and some few months ago I informed her of the date of my intended arrival in England. To that letter I received no reply, and when I landed and called at the lady's house I learned that she had fled. I set to work to discover the truth, and I have discovered it. I set to work to track her, and I have succeeded. Her story is a common story of betrayal and desertion, and I am not inclined to trouble you with it. She has not the remotest hope of assistance from the man who betrayed her; she has not the remotest hope of assistance from a person in the world with the exception of myself.

"Dr. Spenlove, notwithstanding what has occurred,

I am here in Portsmouth this night with the intention of carrying out the engagement into which I entered with her. I am here, prepared to marry her, on express conditions. The adoption of assumed names, the obscurity she has courted, the absolute silence which is certain to be observed by her, by me, by you, by the man who betrayed her, render me safe. It is known that I have come to England to be married, and she will be accepted as I present her when I return with her as my wife. I will have no discussion as to my motives for taking what the world would consider an unwise step, but you will understand that my feelings for the woman who has played me false must be of a deep and sincere nature, or I should not dream of taking it.

"It now only remains for me to state the conditions under which I am prepared to save her from even a more shameful degradation than that into which she has already fallen. I speak plainly; you know as well as I the fate that is in store for her if my offer is rejected."

## CHAPTER III.

### DR. SPENLOVE UNDERTAKES A DELICATE MISSION.

MR. GORDON had spoken throughout in a cold, passionless tone, and with no accent of emotion in his voice. If anything could have been destructive of the idea that he loved the woman he wished to marry, it was his measured delivery of the story he had related; and yet there could be no question that there was some nobility in the nature of the sacrifice he was prepared to make for her sake. The contrast between the man and the woman struck Dr. Spenlove very forcibly; the man was hard and cold, the woman was sensitive and sympathetic. Had their circumstances been equal, and had Dr. Spenlove been an interested adviser, he would have had no hesitation in saying to her, "Do not marry this man; no touch of tenderness unites you; you can never kindle in his heart the fire which burns within your own; wedded to him a dull routine of years will be your portion." But he felt that he dared not encourage himself to pursue this line of argument. Although the most pregnant part of Mr. Gordon's errand had yet to be disclosed, it seemed to him that he would very likely presently be the arbiter of her destiny. "You will be able," Mr. Gordon had said, "to make clear to her the effect of her consent or refusal upon her destiny and the destiny of her child."



Whatever the conditions, it would be his duty to urge her to accept the offer that would be made to her; otherwise he might be condemning her to a course of life he shuddered to contemplate. The responsibility would be too solemn for mere sentimental considerations. These were the thoughts that flashed through his mind in the momentary pause before Mr. Gordon spoke again.

"I believe," his visitor then said, "that I am in possession of the facts relating to Mrs. Turner's circumstances"—he reverted to the name by which she was generally known—"but you will corroborate them perhaps. She is in want."

"She is in the lowest depths of poverty."

"Unless she pays the arrears of rent she will be turned into the streets to-morrow."

"That is the landlord's determination."

"She would have been turned out to-day but for your intervention."

"You are well informed, I see," observed Dr. Spenlove, rather nettled.

"I have conversed with the landlord and with others concerning her. She lives among the poor, who have troubles enough of their own to grapple with, and are unable, even if they were inclined, to render her the assistance of which she stands in need. She seems to have kept herself aloof from them, for which I commend her. Now, Dr. Spenlove, I will have no specter of shame and degradation to haunt her life and mine. Her past must be buried, and the grave must never be opened. To that I am resolved, and no power on earth can turn me from it."

"But her child," faltered Dr. Spenlove.

"She will have no child. She must part with her, and the parting must be final and irrevocable. The steps that I shall take to this end shall be so effectual that if by chance in the future they should happen to meet she shall not recognize her. I propose to have the child placed with a family who will adopt her as a child of their own; there will be little difficulty in finding such a family, to the head of which a sum of one hundred pounds will be paid yearly for maintenance. I name no limit as to time. So long as the child lives so long will the payment be made through my lawyers. Should the child die before she reaches the age of twenty-one the sum of five hundred pounds will be paid to the people who undertake the charge; they will know nothing of me or of the mother; our names will not be divulged to them, and they will not be able to trace us. Should they evince a disposition to be troublesome in this respect the child will be taken from them by my lawyers, and another home provided for her. A hundred pounds a year is a liberal sum, and there will not be the least difficulty in carrying out the proposed arrangement. In proof that I desire the child to have every chance of leading a happy life I will engage to give her a marriage portion of five hundred pounds. Judge for yourself whether a woman in Mrs. Turner's circumstances would be acting wisely in rejecting my proposition."

"You have spoken in a most generous spirit," said Dr. Spenlove slowly, "so far as money goes, but you seem not to have taken into consideration a mother's feelings."

"I have not taken them into consideration; they are not part of my plan. I have looked at the matter only from two points of view—the worldly aspect of it, and my desire to carry out my personal wishes. I decline to regard it or to argue upon it from the point of view of a mother's feelings. I ask you to judge of it as a man of the world."

"Of which," said Dr. Spenlove, "as I have hinted to you, I am a poor example. Do you expect me to provide for the babe such a home as that you have described?"

"Not at all. It is my business to carry out my plan if she accepts the conditions."

"What, then, do you wish me to do?"

"To lay my proposition before her as nearly as possible in my own words; to impress upon her that it is her duty to agree to it for her own sake and for the sake of the child."

"Why not do so yourself?"

"I have not seen her. I will not see her while she holds in her arms her burden of shame. She shall come to me free and unencumbered, or she shall not come at all. I could not speak to her as I have spoken to you; I should not be able to command myself. She would plead to me, and I should answer her in bitterness and anger. Such a scene would set me so strongly against her that I should immediately relinquish my purpose. You can reason with her; you can show her the path in which her duty clearly lies. I do not deny that she is called upon to make a sacrifice, but it is a sacrifice which will lead to good, it is a sacrifice which *every right-minded man* would urge her to make.

Indifferent man of the world as you proclaim yourself to be you cannot be blind to the almost sure fate in store for her in the position in which she is placed. Your experiences must have made you acquainted with the stories of women who have fallen as she has fallen, and you will know how many of them were raised from the depths, and how many of them fell into deeper shame. Dr. Spenlove, I have entirely finished what I came here to say."

"Before I undertake to do what you require of me," said Dr. Spenlove, who by this time understood the man he had to deal with, "I must ask you a question or two."

"If they relate to the present business," responded Mr. Gordon, "I will answer them."

"Failing me, will you employ some other person to act as your envoy to Mrs. Turner?"

"I shall employ no other, for the reason that there is no other whose counsel would be likely to influence her. And for another reason—I have disclosed to you what I will disclose to no other person."

"Would you leave her as she is?"

"I would leave her as she is. Early in the morning I should take my departure, and she would have to face the future unaided by me."

"If she will not listen to me, if she will not make the sacrifice, you will surely give her, out of your abundance, some little assistance to help her along?"

"Out of my abundance," replied Mr. Gordon sternly, "I will give her nothing, not the smallest coin. Make your mind easy upon one point, Dr. Spenlove. So far as a practical man like myself is likely to go I will do

what I can to make her happy. She will live in a respectable atmosphere, she will be surrounded by respectable people, she will have all the comforts that money can purchase, and I shall never utter to her a word of reproach. Her past will be as dead to me as if it had never been."

Dr. Spenlove rose. "It is your desire that I shall go to her to-night?"

"It is. The matter must be settled without delay."

"If she asks for time to reflect——"

"I must have the answer to-night, yea or nay."

There was no more to be said. The man who had been wronged and deceived, and who had made an offer so strange and generous and cruel, was fixed and implacable.

"I may be absent for some time," said Dr. Spenlove. "Where shall I see you upon my return?"

"Here, if you will allow me to stay."

"You are welcome. My landlady will make you a bed on the sofa."

"Thank you; I need no bed. I can employ myself while you are away."

Dr. Spenlove stepped to the door, and turned on the threshold.

"One other question, Mr. Gordon. If I succeed, when will you require her to give up her child?"

"To-morrow evening. I will have a carriage ready at the door. On the following day Mrs. Turner and I will leave Portsmouth, and there is no probability after that that you and I will ever meet again."

Dr. Spenlove nodded, and left the house.

## CHAPTER IV.

### “ONE MORE UNFORTUNATE.”

THE snow was falling more heavily, and a strong wind blew the flakes into his face as he made his way to Mrs. Turner's garret. He walked as quickly as he could, but his progress was impeded by the force of the wind and by its driving the snow into his eyes. Despite these obstacles his intuitive observance of what was passing around him and all his mental forces were in active play, and it was a proof of his kindly and unselfish nature that, in the light of the vital errand upon which he was engaged, he was oblivious of the sense of physical discomfort. Conflicting questions agitated his mind. No longer under the influence of the cold, cruel logic which distinguished Mr. Gordon's utterances, he once more asked himself whether he would be right in urging Mrs. Turner to renounce her maternal duties and obligations, and to part forever with the child of her blood. The human and the divine law were in conflict. On one side degradation and direst poverty from which there seemed no prospect of escape, and driving the mother perhaps to a course of life condemned alike by God and man; on the other side a life of material comfort and respectability for herself and child. A fortuitous accident—a chance for which he had prayed earlier in the night—

had made him at once the arbiter and the judge; his hand was upon the wheel to steer these two helpless beings through the voyage upon which they were embarked, and upon him rested the responsibility. There was no case here of plowing through unknown waters over hidden rocks; he saw the ocean of life before him, he saw the rocks beneath. Amid those rocks lay the forms of lost, abandoned women who in their mortal career would surely have been saved had an offer of rescue come such as had come to the woman who chiefly occupied his thoughts. They would have been spared the suffering of despairing days, the horrors of despairing death; they would have been lifted from the gulf of shame and ignominy. New hopes, new joys, would have arisen to comfort them. The sacrifice they would have been called upon to make would have been hallowed by the consciousness that they had performed their duty. It was not alone the happiness of the mortal life that had to be considered. If the ministrations of God's ministers on earth were not a mockery and a snare, it was the immortal life that was equally at stake. The soul's reward sprang from the body's suffering.

And still the pitiless snow fell, and the wind howled around him, and through the white whirlwind he beheld the light of heaven and the stars shining upon him.

How should he act? He imagined himself steering the vessel through an ocean of sad waters. On the right lay a haven of rest, on the left lay a dark and desolate shore. Which way should he turn the wheel? His pity for her had drawn from him during their last

interview the exclamation, "God help you!" and she had asked hopelessly, "Will he?" He had turned from her then; he had no answer to make. There is, he said to himself now, no divine mediation in human affairs; the divine hand is not stretched forth to give food to the hungry. In so grave an issue as the starvation of a human being dependence upon divine aid will not avail. Admitting this, he felt it to be almost a heresy, but at the same time he knew that it was true.

There were but few people in the white streets, and of those few a large proportion tinged his' musings with a deeper melancholy. These were ragged, shivering children, and women recklessly or despondently gashing the white carpet, so pure and innocent and fair in its sentimental aspect, so hard and bitter and cruel in its material. By a devious process of reasoning he drew a parallel between it and the problem he was engaged in solving. It was poetic, and it froze the marrow; it had a soul and a body, one a sweet and smiling spirit, the other a harsh and frowning reality. The heart of a poet without boots would have sunk within him as he trod the snow-clad streets.

Dr. Spenlove's meditations were arrested by a sudden tumult. A number of people approached him gesticulating and talking eagerly and excitedly, the cause of their excitement being a couple of policemen who bore between them the wet, limp body of a motionless woman. He was drawn magnetically toward the crowd, and was immediately recognized.

"Here's Dr. Spenlove," they cried. "He knows her."



Yes, he knew her the moment his eyes fell upon her, the people having made way for him. The body borne by the policemen was that of a young girl scarcely out of her teens, an unfortunate who had walked the streets for two or three years past.

"You had better come with us, doctor," said one of the policemen, to both of whom he was known. "We have just picked her out of the water."

A middle-aged woman pushed herself close to Dr. Spenlove.

"She said she'd do it a month ago," said this woman, "if luck didn't turn."

Good God! If luck didn't turn! What direction in the unfortunate girl's career was the lucky turn to take to prevent her from courting death?

"You will come with us, sir," said the policeman.

"Yes," answered Dr. Spenlove mechanically.

The police station was but a hundred yards away, and thither they walked, Dr. Spenlove making a hasty examination of the body as they proceeded.

"Too late, I'm afraid, sir," said the policeman.

"I fear so," said Dr. Spenlove gravely.

It proved to be the case. The girl was dead.

The signing of papers and other formalities detained Dr. Spenlove at the police station for nearly an hour, and he departed with a heavy weight at his heart. He had been acquainted with the girl whose life's troubles were over since the commencement of his career in Portsmouth. She was then a child of fourteen, living with her parents, who were respectable working people. Growing into dangerous beauty, she had fallen as others had fallen, and had fled from her home to find herself

after a time deserted by her betrayer. Meanwhile the home in which she had been reared was broken up; the mother died, the father left the town. Thrown upon her own resources, she drifted into the ranks of the "unfortunates," and became a familiar figure in low haunts, one of civilization's painted, bedizened night-birds of the streets. Dr. Spenlove had befriended her, counseled her, warned her, urged her to reform, and her refrain was: "What can I do? I must live." It was not an uncommon case; the good doctor came in contact with many such, and could have prophesied with unerring accuracy the fate in store for them. The handwriting is ever on the wall, and no special gift is needed to decipher it. Drifting, drifting, drifting, forever drifting and sinking lower and lower till the end comes. It had come soon to this young girl—mercifully, thought Dr. Spenlove as he plodded slowly on, for surely the snapping of life's chord in the spring-time of her life was better than the sure descent into a premature, haggard, and sinful old age. Recalling these reminiscences, his doubts with respect to his duty in the mission he had undertaken were solved. There was but one safe course for Mrs. Turner to follow.

He hastened his steps. His interview with Mr. Gordon and the tragic incident in which he had been engaged had occupied a considerable time, and it was now close upon midnight. It was late for an ordinary visit, but he was a medical man, and the doors of his patients were open to him at all hours. In the poor street in which Mrs. Turner resided many of the houses were left unlocked night and day for the convenience of the lodgers, and her house being one of these, Dr.

Spenlove had no difficulty in obtaining admission. He shook the snow from his clothes, and ascending the stairs, knocked at Mrs. Turner's door; no answer coming he knocked again and again, and at length he turned the handle and entered.

The room was quite dark; there was no fire in the grate, no candle light. He listened for the sound of breathing, but none reached his ears.

"Mrs. Turner!" he cried.

Receiving no response, he struck a match. The room was empty. Greatly alarmed, he went to the landing and knocked at an adjoining door. A woman's voice called.

"Who's there?"

"It is I, Dr. Spenlove."

"Wait a moment, sir."

He heard shuffling steps, and presently the tenant appeared, only partially dressed, with a lighted candle in her hand.

"I didn't send for you, doctor," she said.

"No. I want to ask you about Mrs. Turner. She is not in her room."

"I thought it was strange I didn't hear the baby crying, but I don't know where she is."

"Did you not hear her go out?"

"No, sir; I come home at ten soaked through and through, and I was glad to get to bed. It aint a night a woman would care to keep out in unless she couldn't help herself."

"Indeed it is not. Did you see anything of her before you went to bed?"

"I didn't see her; I heard her. I was just going off

when she knocked at my door and asked if I could give her a little milk for the baby, but I hadn't any to give. Besides, she aint got a feeding bottle that I know of. She's been trying to borrow one, but nobody in the house could oblige her. She's having a hard time of it, doctor."

"She is, poor soul!" said Dr. Spenlove, with a sigh.

"It's the way with all of us, sir; no one ought to know that better than you do. There aint a lodger in the house that's earning more than twelve shillings a week—not much to keep a family on, is it, sir? And we've got a landlord with a heart of stone. If it hadn't been for her baby, and that it might have got him in hot water, he'd have turned her out weeks ago. He's bound to do it to-morrow if her rent aint paid. He told me so this morning when he screwed the last penny out of me."

"Do you know whether she succeeded in obtaining milk for the child?"

"It's hardly likely, I should say. Charity begins at home, doctor."

"It is natural and just that it should—but it is terrible, terrible! Where can Mrs. Turner have gone to?"

"Heaven knows. One thing I do know, doctor—she's got no friends; she wouldn't make any, kept herself to herself, gave herself airs, some said, though I don't go as far as that; I dare say she has her reasons, only when a woman sets herself up like that it turns people against her. Are you sure she aint in her room?"

"The room is empty."

"It's enough to be the death of a baby to take it out such a night as this. Listen to the wind."

A furious gust shook the house, and made every window rattle. To Dr. Spenlove's agitated senses it seemed to be alive with ominous voices, proclaiming death and destruction to every weak and helpless creature that dared to brave it. He passed his hand across his forehead in distress.

"I must find her. I suppose you cannot tell me of any place she may have gone to for assistance."

"I can't, sir. There's a bare chance that, as she had no coals and no money to buy 'em with, someone in the house has taken her in for the night. I'll inquire if you like."

"I shall be obliged to you if you will," said Dr. Spenlove, catching eagerly at the suggestion, "and I pray that you may be right."

"You won't mind waiting in the passage, sir, till I've dressed myself. I shan't be a minute."

She was very soon ready, and she went about the house making inquiries; and, returning, said that none of the lodgers could give her any information concerning Mrs. Turner.

"I am sorry to have disturbed you," said Dr. Spenlove, and wishing her good-night he once more faced the storm. The fear by which he was oppressed was that the offer of succor had come too late, and that Mrs. Turner had been driven by despair to the execution of some desperate design to put an end to her misery. Instinctively, and with a sinking heart, he took the direction of the sea, hurrying eagerly after *every person* he saw ahead of him in the hope that it

might be the woman of whom he was in search. The snow was many inches thick on the roads, and was falling fast; the wind tore through the now almost deserted streets, moaning, sobbing, shrieking, with an appalling human suggestion in its tones created by Dr. Spenlove's fears. Now and then he met a policeman, and stopped to exchange a few words with him, the intention of which was to ascertain if the man had seen any person answering to the description of Mrs. Turner. He did not mention her by name, for he had an idea—supposing his search to be happily successful—that Mr. Gordon would withdraw his offer if any publicity were attracted to the woman he was ready to marry. The policemen could not assist him; they had seen no woman with a baby in her arms tramping the streets on this wild night.

"Anything special, sir?" they asked.

"No," he replied, "nothing special," and so went on his way.

## CHAPTER V.

"COME! WE WILL END IT."

WHEN Dr. Spenlove left Mrs. Turner she sat for some time in a state of dull lethargy. No tear came into her eyes, no sigh escaped from her bosom. During the past few months she had exhausted the entire range of remorseful and despairing emotion. The only comfort she had received through all those dreary months sprang from the helpful sympathy of Dr. Spenlove; apart from that she had never been buoyed up by a ray of light, had never been cheered by the hope of a brighter day. Her one prevailing thought, which she did not express in words, was that she would be better dead than alive. She did not court death; she waited for it, and silently prayed that it would come soon. It was not from the strength of inward moral support that she had the courage to live on, it was simply that she had schooled herself into the belief that before or when her child was born death would release her from the horrors of life. "If I live till my baby is born," she thought, "I pray that it may die with me."

Here was the case of a woman without the moral support which springs from faith in any kind of religion. In some few mortals such faith is intuitive, but in most instances it requires guidance and wise

direction in childhood. Often it degenerates into bigotry and intolerance, and assumes the hateful, narrow form of condemning to perdition all who do not subscribe to their own particular belief. Pagans are as worthy of esteem as the bigots who arrogate to themselves the monopoly of heavenly rewards.

Mrs. Turner was neither pagan nor bigot; she was a nullity. Her religious convictions had not yet taken shape, and though, if she had been asked, "Are you a Christian?" she would have replied, "Oh, yes, I am a Christian," she would have been unable to demonstrate in what way she was a Christian, or what she understood by the term. In this respect many thousands of human beings resemble her.

Faith is strength, mightier than the sword, mightier than the pen, mightier than all the world's store of gold and precious stones, and when this strength is displayed in the sweetness of resignation, or in submission to the divine will which chastens human life with sorrow, its influence upon the passions is sustaining and purifying and sublime. If Mrs. Turner had been blessed with faith which displayed itself in this direction she would have been the happier for it, and hard as were her trials she would to the last have looked forward with hope instead of despair.

The story related by Mr. Gordon to Dr. Spenlove was true in every particular. There was no distortion or exaggeration; he had done for Mrs. Turner and her father all that he said he had done. He had not mentioned the word "love" in connection with the woman he had asked to be his wife. She, on her part, had no such love for him as that which should bind a man and



a woman in a lifelong tie; she held him in respect and esteem—that was all. But she had accepted him, and had contemplated the future with satisfaction until, until——

Until a man crossed her path who wooed her in different fashion, and who lavished upon her flatteries and endearments which made her false to the promise she had given. For this man she had deserted the home which Mr. Gordon had provided for her, and had deserted it in such a fashion that she could never return to it, could never again be received in it—and this without a word of explanation to the man she had deceived. She was in her turn deceived, and she awoke from her dream to find herself a lost and abandoned woman. In horror she fled from him, and cast her lot among strangers, knowing full well that she would meet with unbearable contumely among those to whom she was known. Hot words had passed between her and her betrayer, and in her anger she had written letters to him which in the eyes of the law would have released him from any obligation it might otherwise have imposed upon him. He was well pleased with this, and he smiled as he put the letters into a place of safety, to be brought forward only in case she annoyed him. She did nothing of the kind; her scorn for him was so profound that she was content to release him unconditionally. So she passed out of his life as he passed out of hers. Neither of these beings, the betrayed or betrayer, reckoned with the future; neither of them gave a thought to the probability that the skeins of fate, which to-day separated them as surely as if they had lived at opposite poles of the

earth, might at some future time bring them together again, and that the pages of the book which they believed was closed forever might be reopened again for weal or woe.

The child's moans aroused the mother from her lethargy. She had no milk to give the babe; Nature's founts were dry, and she went from door to door in the house in which she lived to beg for food. She returned as she went, empty-handed, and the child continued to moan.

Dr. Spenlove, her only friend, had bidden her farewell. She had not a penny in her pocket; there was not a crust of bread in the cupboard; not an ounce of coal, not a stick of wood to kindle a fire. She was thinly clad, and she did not possess a single article upon which she could have obtained the smallest advance. She had taken the room furnished, and if what it contained had been her property a broker would have given but a few shillings for everything in it.

The little hand instinctively wandered to the mother's wasted breast, and plucked at it imploringly, ravenously. The woman looked around in the last throes of an anguish too deep for expression except in the appalling words to which she gave despairing utterance.

"Come!" she cried, "we will end it!"

Out into the cold streets she crept, unobserved. She shivered, and a weird smile crossed her lips.

"Hush, hush!" she murmured to her babe. "It will soon be over. Better dead—better dead—for you and for me!"

She crept toward the sea, and hugged the wall when

she heard approaching footsteps. She need not have feared; the night was too inclement for any but selfish considerations. The soft snow fell, and enwrap her and her child in its pitiless shroud. She paused by a lamp post, and cast an upward look at the heavens, in which she could see the glimmering of the stars. Then she went on, and pressed her babe close to her breast to stifle its feeble sobs.

"Be still, be still," she murmured. "There is no hope in life for either of us. Better dead—better dead!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FRIEND IN NEED.

DESPERATELY resolved as she was to carry her fatal design into execution, she had not reckoned with nature. Weakened by the life of privation she had led for so many months, and also by the birth of her child, her physical forces had reached the limit of human endurance. She faltered and staggered, the ground slipped from beneath her weary feet. Vain was the struggle; her vital power was spent. From her overcharged heart a voiceless and terrible prayer went up to heaven. "Give me strength, O God, give me but a little strength! I have not far to go!"

She fought the air with her disengaged hand, and tossed her head this way and that, but her ruthless prayer was not answered, and though she struggled fiercely she managed to crawl only a few more steps. She had yet hundreds of yards to go to reach the sea when some chord within her seemed to snap; her farther progress was instantly arrested, and she found herself incapable of moving backward or forward. Swaying to and fro, the earth, the sky, the whirling snow, and the dim light of the stars swam in her sight and faded from before her.

In that supreme moment she saw a spiritual vision of *her dishonored life.*

Deprived early of a mother's counsel and companionship, she had passed her days with a spendthrift father, whose love for her was so tainted with selfishness that it was not only valueless but mischievous. When she grew to woman's estate she was worse than alone; she had no guide, no teacher, to point out the rocks and shoals of maidenhood, to inculcate in her the principles of virtue which would have been a safeguard against the specious wiles of men whose eyes were charmed by her beauty, and whose only aim was to lure her to ruin. Then her father died, and a friend came forward who offered her a home and an honorable position in the world. Friendless and penniless, she accepted him, and gave him her promise and accepted his money. Love had not touched her heart; she thought it had when another man wooed her in a more alluring fashion, and by this man she had been beguiled and betrayed. Then she knew what she had lost, but it was too late; her good name was gone, and she fled to a strange part of the country and lived among strangers, a heartbroken, despairing woman. All the salient features in her career flashed before her. She saw the man who had trusted her, she saw the man in whom she put her trust, she saw herself, an abandoned creature, with a child of shame in her arms. These ghostly figures stood clearly limned in that one last moment of swiftly fading light, as in the moment of sunrise on a frosty morning every distant object stands sharply outlined against the sky; then darkness fell upon her, and with an inarticulate, despairing cry she sank to the ground in a deathlike swoon. The *wind sobbed and shrieked and wailed around her and*

her child, the falling snow with treacherous tenderness fell softly upon them; herself insensible, she had no power to shake it off; her babe was conscious, but its feeble movements were of small avail against the white pall which was descending upon her and her outcast mother. Thicker and thicker it grew, and in the wild outcry of this bitter night Fate seemed to have pronounced its inexorable sentence of death against these unfortunate beings.

Ignorant of the fact that chance or a spiritual messenger was guiding him aright, Dr. Spenlove plodded through the streets. He had no clew, and received none from the half dozen persons or so he encountered as he walked toward the sea. He was scarcely fit for the task he had undertaken, but so intent was he upon his merciful mission that he bestowed no thought upon himself. The nipping air aggravating the cough from which he was suffering, he kept his mouth closed as a protection, and peered anxiously before him for some signs of the woman he was pursuing. A man walked briskly and cheerily toward him, puffing at a large and fragrant cigar, and stamping his feet sturdily into the snow. This man wore a demonstratively furred overcoat; his hands were gloved in fur; his boots were thick and substantial; and in the independent assertion that he was at peace with the world, and on exceedingly good terms with himself, he hummed the words, in Italian, of the jewel song in "Faust" every time he removed the cigar from his lips. Although it was but a humming reminiscence of the famous and beautiful number, his faint rendering of it was absolutely faultless, and proved him to be a man of refined musicianly

taste, quite out of keeping with his demonstratively furred overcoat. Music, however, was not his profession. The instincts of his race had welded the divine art into his soul, and the instincts of his race had made him—a pawnbroker. Singular conjunction of qualities—the music of the celestial spheres and fourpence in the pound a month! A vulgar occupation, that of a pawnbroker, which high-toned gentlemen and mortals of aristocratic birth regard with scorn and contempt. But the last vulgar and debasing music-hall ditty which was caroled with delight by the majority of these gilded beings of a higher social grade never found lodgment in the soul of Mr. Moss, which, despite that he devoted his business hours to the lending of insignificant sums of money upon any small articles which were submitted to his judgment across the dark counter of his pawnbroking establishment, was attuned to a far loftier height than theirs in the divine realms of song. Puff, puff, puff at his cigar, the curling wreaths from which were whirled into threads of fantastic confusion by the gusts of wind, or hung in faint gray curls of beauty during a lull. The starry gleam was transferred from the lips to the fur-covered hand:

“E’ strano poter il viso suo veder ;  
Ah! mi posso guardar mi pospo rimirar.  
Di, sei tu? Margherita !  
Di, sei tu? Dimmi su !  
Dimmi su, di su, di su, di su presto !”

From hand to lips the starry gleam, and the soul of Mr. Moss followed the air as he puffed his weed. The pawnbroker broke into ecstasy. From lips to

hand again the starry light, and his voice grew rapturous:

“Ceil! E come una man  
Che sul baccio mi posa!  
Ah! Io rido in poter  
Me stessa qui veder!”

The last trill brought him close to Dr. Spenlove.

“Friend, friend!” cried the doctor, “a word with you, for charity’s sake.”

Mr. Moss did not disregard the appeal. Slipping off his right glove, and thereby displaying two fingers decorated with diamond rings, he fished a couple of coppers from a capacious pocket, and thrust them into Dr. Spenlove’s outstretched palm. Dr. Spenlove caught his hand and said:

“No, no, it is not for that. Will you kindly tell me——”

“Why,” interrupted Mr. Moss, “it is Dr. Spenlove!”

“Mr. Moss,” said Dr. Spenlove, with a sigh of relief, “I am glad it is you—I am glad it is you.”

“Not gladder than I am,” responded Mr. Moss jovially. “Even in weather like this I shouldn’t care to be anybody else but myself.”

This feeble attempt at humor was lost upon Dr. Spenlove.

“You have come from the direction I am taking, and you may have seen a person I am looking for—a woman with a baby in her arms—a poor woman, Mr. Moss, whom I am most anxious to find.”

“I’ve come from the Hard, but I took no account of the people I passed. A man has enough to do to look after himself, with the snow making icicles in his hair,



and the wind trying to bite his nose off his face. The first law of nature, you know, doctor, is——”

“Humanity,” interrupted Dr. Spenlove.

“No, no, doctor,” corrected Mr. Moss; “number one’s the first law—number one, number one.”

“You did not meet the woman, then?”

“Not to notice her. You’ve a bad cough, doctor; you’ll have to take some of your own medicine.” He laughed. “Standing here is enough to freeze one.”

“I am sorry I troubled you,” said Dr. Spenlove. “Good-night.”

He was moving away when Mr. Moss detained him.

“But look here, doctor, you’re not fit to be tramping the streets in this storm; you ought to be snuggled up between the blankets. Come home with me, and Mrs. Moss shall make you a hot grog.”

Dr. Spenlove shook his head and passed on. Mr. Moss gazed at the retreating figure, his thoughts commingling.

“A charitable man, the good doctor, a large-hearted gentleman. ‘Tardi si fa—’ And poor as a church mouse. What woman is he running after? Mrs. Moss would give her a piece of her mind for taking out a baby on such a night. Too bad to let him go alone, but Mrs. Moss will be waiting up for me. She won’t mind when I tell her. I’ve a good mind to—— Yes, I will.”

And after the doctor went Mr. Moss, and caught up to him.

“Doctor, can I be of any assistance to you?”

“I shall be glad of your help,” said Dr. Spenlove *eagerly*. “I’m rather worn out—I have had a hard day.”

"It's a trying life, the life of a doctor," said Mr. Moss sympathetically as they walked slowly on. "We were talking of it at home only a month ago when we were discussing what we should put Michael to—our eldest boy, doctor."

"You have a large family," observed Dr. Spenlove.

"Not too large," said Mr. Moss cheerfully. "Only eleven. My mother had twenty-five, and I've a sister with eighteen. Our youngest—what a rogue he is, doctor—is eight months; our eldest, Michael, is seventeen next birthday. Schooldays over, he buckles to for work. We had a family council to decide what he should be. We discussed all the professions, and reduced them to two—doctor, stockbroker. Michael had a leaning to be a doctor, that's why we kept it in for discussion, and we succeeded in arguing him out of it. Your time's not your own, you see. Called up at all hours of the night and in all weathers; go to a dinner party, and dragged away before it's half over; obliged to leave the best behind you; can't enjoy a game of cards or billiards. You've got a little bet on, perhaps, or you're playing for points, and you're just winning when it's, 'Doctor, you must come at once; so and so's dying.' What's the consequence? You make a miscue, or you revoke, and you lose your money. If you're married you're worse off than if you're single; you haven't any comfort of your life. 'No, no, Michael,' says I, 'no doctoring. Stockbroking—that's what you'll go for.' And that's what he is going for. Most of our people, doctor, are lucky in their children; they don't forget to honor their father and their mother that their days may be long in the

land, and so on. There's big fish on the Stock Exchange, and they're worth trying for. What's the use of sprats? It takes a hundred to fill a dish. Catch one salmon and your dish is filled. A grand fish, doctor, a grand fish! What to do with our sons? Why, put them where they can make money. *We* know what we're about. There's no brain in the world to compare with ours, and that's no boast, let me tell you. Take your strikes now—a strike of bricklayers for a rise of twopence per day in their wages. How many of our race among the strikers? Not one. Did you ever see a Jewish bricklayer carrying a hod up a hundred-foot ladder, and risking his neck for bread, cheese, and beer? No, and you never will. We did our share of that kind of work in old Egypt; we made all the bricks we wanted to, and now we're taking a rest. A strike of bootmakers. How many of our race among the cobblers? One in a thousand, and he's an addlepate. We deal in boots—wholesale, but we don't make them ourselves. Not likely. We build houses—with *our* money and *your* bricks and mortar. When we're after birds we don't care for sparrows; we aim at eagles, and we bring them down, we bring them down." He beat his gloved hands together and chuckled. "What's your opinion, doctor?"

"You are right, quite right," said Dr. Spenlove, upon whose ears his companion's words had fallen like the buzzing of insects.

"Should say I was," said Mr. Moss, and would have continued had not Dr. Spenlove hurried forward out of hearing.

During the time that Mr. Moss was expounding his

views they had not met a soul, and Dr. Spenlove had seen nothing to sustain his hope of finding Mrs. Turner. But now his observant eyes detected a movement in the snow-laden road which thrilled him with apprehension, and caused him to hasten hurriedly to the spot. It was as if some living creature was striving feebly to release itself from the fatal white shroud. Mr. Moss hurried after him, and they reached the spot at the same moment. In a fever of anxiety Dr. Spenlove knelt and pushed the snow aside, and then there came into view a baby's hand and arm.

"Good God!" he murmured, and gently lifted the babe from the cold bed.

"Is it alive, is it alive?" cried Mr. Moss, all his nerves tingling with excitement. "Give it to me—quick; there's someone else there."

He saw portions of female clothing in the snow which Dr. Spenlove was pushing frantically away. He snatched up the babe, and opening his fur coat, clasped the little one closely to his breast, and enveloped it in its warm folds. To release Mrs. Turner from her perilous condition, to raise her to her feet, to put his mouth to her mouth, his ear to her heart, to assure himself that there was a faint pulsation in her body—all this was the work of a few moments.

"Does she breathe, doctor?" asked Mr. Moss.

"She does," replied Dr. Spenlove, and added in deep distress, "but she may die in my arms!"

"Not if we can save her. Here, help me off with this thick coat. Easy, easy; I have only one arm free. Now let us get her into it. That's capitally done. Put the baby *inside* as well; it will hold them both

comfortably. Button it over them. There, that will keep them nice and warm. Do you know her? Does she live far from here? Is she the woman you are looking for?"

"Yes, and her lodging is a mile away. How can we get her home?"

"We'll manage it. Ah, we're in luck! Here's a cab coming toward us. Hold on to them while I speak to the driver."

He was off and back again with the cab, with the driver of which he had made a rapid bargain, in a wonderfully short space of time. The mother and her babe were lifted tenderly in, the address was given to the driver, the two kind-hearted men took their seats, the windows were pulled up, and the cab crawled slowly on toward Mrs. Turner's lodging. Dr. Spenlove's skillful hands were busy over the woman, restoring animation to her frozen limbs, and Mr. Moss was doing the same to the child.

"How are you getting along, doctor? I am progressing famously. The child is warming up, and is beginning to breathe quite nicely." He was handling the babe as tenderly as if it were a child of his own.

"She will recover, I trust," said Dr. Spenlove, "but we were only just in time. It is fortunate that I met you, Mr. Moss; you have been the means of saving two helpless, unfortunate beings."

"Nonsense, nonsense," answered Mr. Moss. "I have only done what any man would do. It is you who have saved them, doctor, not I. I am proud to know you, and I shall be glad to hear of your getting along *in the world*. You haven't done very well up to

now, I fear. Go for the big fish and the big birds, doctor."

"If that were the universal law of life," asked Dr. Spenlove in a tone of exquisite compassion, with a motion of his hands toward Mrs. Turner and her child, "what would become of these?"

"Ah, yes, yes," responded Mr. Moss gravely, "but I mean in a general way, you know. To be sure, there are millions more little fish and birds than there are big ones, but it's a selfish world, doctor."

"You are not an exemplification of it," said Dr. Spenlove, his eyes brightening. "The milk of human kindness will never be frozen, even on such bitter nights as this, while men like you are in it."

"You make me ashamed of myself," cried Mr. Moss violently, but instantly sobered down. "And now, as I see we are close to the poor woman's house, perhaps you will tell me what more I can do."

Dr. Spenlove took from his pocket the money with which he had intended to pay his fare to London, and held it out to Mr. Moss. "Pay the cabman for me, and assist me to carry the woman up to her room."

Mr. Moss thrust the money back. "I will pay him myself; it is my cab, not yours. I don't allow anyone to get the better of me if I can help it."

When the cab stopped he jumped out and settled with the driver, and then he and Dr. Spenlove carried Mrs. Turner and her babe to the top of the house. The room was dark and cold, and Mr. Moss shivered. He struck a match, and held it while Dr. Spenlove laid the mother and child upon their wretched bed.

"Kindly stop here a moment," said the doctor.

He went into the passage, and called to the lodger on the same floor of whom he had made inquiries earlier in the night. She soon appeared, and after they had exchanged a few words accompanied him, but partially dressed, to Mrs. Turner's room. She brought a lighted candle with her, and upon Mr. Moss taking it from her devoted herself, with Dr. Spenlove, to her fellow-lodger and the babe.

"Dear, dear, dear!" she said piteously. "Poor soul, poor soul!"

Mr. Moss was not idle. All the finer qualities of his nature were stirred to action by the adventures of the night. He knelt before the grate; it was empty; not a cinder had been left; some gray ashes on the hearth—that was all. He looked into the broken coal scuttle; it had been scraped bare. Rising to his feet, he stepped to the cupboard; a cracked cup and saucer were there, a chipped plate or two, a mouthless jug, and not a vestige of food. Without a word he left the room, and sped downstairs.

He was absent fifteen or twenty minutes, and when he returned it was in the company of a man who carried a hundredweight of coals upon his shoulders. Mr. Moss himself was loaded; under his armpits two bundles of wood; in one hand a loaf of bread, tea, and butter; in his other hand a can of milk.

"God bless you, sir!" said the woman who was assisting Dr. Spenlove.

Mr. Moss knelt again before the grate, and made a fire. Kettle in hand he searched for water.

"You will find some in my room, sir," said the woman.

Mrs. Turner and her babe were now in bed, the child still craving for food, the mother still unconscious, but breathing heavily. The fire lit, and the kettle on, Mr. Moss put on his fur overcoat, whispered a good-night to Dr. Spenlove, received a grateful pressure of the hand in reply, slipped out of the house, and took his way home, humming:

“O del ciel angeli immortal,  
Deh mi guidate con voi lassù!  
Dio giusto, a te m’abbandono,  
Buon Dio m’accorda il tuo perdono!”

He looked at his hands, which were black from contact with the coals.

“What will Mrs. Moss say?” he murmured.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE RESULT OF DR. SPENLOVE'S MISSION.

AN hour after Mr. Moss' departure Mrs. Turner opened her eyes. It was a moment for which Dr. Spenlove had anxiously waited. He had satisfied himself that both of his patients were in a fair way of recovery, and thus far his heart was relieved. The woman who had assisted him had also taken her departure after having given the babe some warm milk. Her hunger appeased, the little one was sleeping calmly and peacefully by her mother's side.

The room was now warm and cheerful. A bright fire was blazing, the kettle was simmering, and a pot of hot tea was standing on the hearth.

Mrs. Turner gazed around in bewilderment. The one candle in the room but dimly lighted it up, and the flickering flames of the fire threw fantastic shadows on walls and ceiling, but so bright was the blaze that there was nothing distressful in these shadowy phantasmagoria. At a little distance from the bed stood Dr. Spenlove, his pale face turned to the waking woman. She looked at him long and steadily, and did not answer him when he smiled encouragingly at her and spoke a few gentle words. She passed her hand over the form of her sleeping child, and then across her forehead, in the effort to recall what had passed. But her

mind was confused; bewildering images of the stages of her desperate resolve presented themselves—blinding snow, shrieking wind, the sea which she had not reached, the phantoms she had conjured up when her senses were deserting her in the white streets.

"Am I alive?" she murmured.

"Happily, dear Mrs. Turner," said Dr. Spenlove. "You are in your own room, and you will soon be well."

"Who brought me here?"

"I and a good friend I was fortunate enough to meet when I was seeking you."

"Why did you seek me?"

"To save you."

"To save me! You knew, then——" She paused.

"I knew nothing except that you were in trouble."

"Where did you find me?"

"In the snow, you and your child. A few minutes longer and it would have been too late. But an angel directed my steps."

"No angel directed you. A devil led you on. Why did you not leave me to die? It was what I went out for. I confess it," she cried recklessly. "It was my purpose not to live; it was my purpose not to allow my child to live! I was justified. Is not a quick death better than a slow, lingering torture which must end in death? Why did you save me? Why did you not leave me to die?"

"It would have been a crime."

"It would have been a mercy. You have brought me back to misery. I do not thank you, doctor."

"You may live to thank me. Drink this tea; it will do you good."

She shook her head rebelliously. "What is the use? You have done me an ill turn. Had it not been for you I should have been at peace. There would have been no more hunger, no more privation. There would have been an end to my shame and degradation."

"You would have taken it with you to the Judgment Seat," said Dr. Spenlove with solemn tenderness. "There would have been worse than hunger and privation. What answer could you have made to the Eternal when you presented yourself before the throne with the crime of murder on your soul?"

"Murder!" she gasped.

"Murder," he gently repeated. "If you went out to-night with an intention so appalling it was not only your own life you would have taken, it was the life of the innocent babe now slumbering by your side. Can you have forgotten that?"

"No," she answered in a tone of faint defiance, "I have not forgotten it; I do not forget it. God would have forgiven me."

"He would not have forgiven you."

"He would. What has she to live for? What have I to live for, a lost and abandoned woman, a mother whose association would bring degradation upon her child? How should I meet her reproaches when she grew to be a woman herself? I am not ungrateful for what you have done for me"—she glanced at the fire and the tea he held in his hand—"but it cannot continue. To-morrow will come. There is always a to-morrow to strike terror to the hearts of such as I. Do you know what I have suffered? Do you see the

future that lies before us? What hope is there in this world for me and my child?"

"There is hope. You brought her into the world."

"God help me, I did!" she moaned.

"By what right, having given her life, would you rob her of the happiness which may be in store for her?"

"Happiness!" she exclaimed. "You speak to me of happiness!"

"I do, in truth and sincerity, if you are willing to make a sacrifice, willing to perform a duty."

"What would I not be willing to do," she cried despairingly, "what would I not cheerfully do, to make her life innocent and happy—not like mine, oh, not like mine! But you are mocking me with empty words."

"Indeed I am not," said Dr. Spenlove earnestly. "Since I left you some hours ago, not expecting to see you again, something has occurred of which I came to speak to you. I found your room deserted, and feared—what we will not mention again. I searched and discovered you in time to save you—and with all my heart I thank God for it. Now drink this tea. I have much to say to you, and you need strength to consider it. If you can eat a little bread and butter—ah, you can. Let me fill your cup again. That is right. Now I recognize the lady it was my pleasure to be able to assist—not to the extent I would have wished, because of my own circumstances."

His reference to her as a lady, no less than the respectful consideration of his manner toward her, brought a flush to her cheeks as she ate. And indeed she ate ravenously; defiant and desperate as had been

her mood, nature's demands are imperative, and no mortal is strong enough to resist them. When she had finished he sat by her side, and was silent a while, debating with himself how he should approach the task which Mr. Gordon had imposed upon him. She saved him the trouble of commencing.

"Are you acquainted with the story of my life?" she asked.

"It has been imparted to me," he replied, "by one to whom I was a stranger till within the last few hours."

"Do I know him?"

"You know him well."

For a moment she thought of the man who had brought her to this gulf of shame, but she dismissed the thought. It was impossible. He was too heartless and base to send a messenger to her on an errand of friendship, and Dr. Spenlove would have undertaken no errand of an opposite nature.

"Who is the gentleman who takes such an interest in me?"

"Mr. Gordon."

She trembled, and her face grew white. She had wronged this man—the law might say that she had robbed him. Oh, why had her fatal design been frustrated, why was not this torturing existence ended?

"You need be under no apprehension," continued Dr. Spenlove; "he comes as a friend." She tossed her head in scorn of herself as one unworthy of friendship. "He has but lately arrived in England from the colonies, and he came with the hope of taking you *back with him as his wife*. It is from him I learned

the sad particulars of your life. Believe me when I say that he is desirous to befriend you."

"In what way? Does he offer me money? I have cost him enough already; my father tricked him, and I have shamefully deceived him. To receive more from him would fill me with shame, but for the sake of my child I will submit to any sacrifice, to any humiliation—I will do anything, anything! It would well become me to show pride when charity is offered to me!"

"Do not forget those words—'for the sake of your child you will submit to any sacrifice.' It is your duty, for her sake, to accept any honorable proposition, and Mr. Gordon offers nothing that is not honorable." He sighed as he said this, for he thought of the sacredness of a mother's love for her firstborn. "He will not give you money apart from himself. United to him, all he has is yours. He wishes to marry you."

She stared at him in amazement. "Are you mad," she cried, "or do you think that I am?"

"I am speaking the sober truth. Mr. Gordon has followed you here because he wishes to marry you."

"Knowing me for what I am," she said, still incredulous, "knowing that I am in the lowest depths of degradation, knowing this"—she touched her child with a gentle hand—"he wishes to marry me!"

"He knows all. There is not an incident in your career with which he does not seem to be acquainted, and in the errand with which he has charged me he is sincerely in earnest."

"Dr. Spenlove," she said slowly, "what is your opinion of a man who comes forward to pluck from

shame and poverty a woman, who has been wronged as I have wronged Mr. Gordon?"

"His actions speak for him," replied Dr. Spenlove.

"He must have a noble nature," she said. "I never regarded him in that light. I took him to be a hard, conscientious, fair-dealing man, who thought I would make him a good wife, but I never believed that he loved me. I did him the injustice of supposing him incapable of love. I am not worthy of him, or of any man."

"Set your mind not upon the past, but upon the future. Think of yourself and of your child in the years to come, and remember the fear and horror by which you have been oppressed in your contemplation of them. I have something further to disclose to you. Mr. Gordon imposes a condition from which he will not swerve, and to which I beg of you to listen with calmness. When you have heard all do not answer hastily. Reflect upon the consequences which hang on your decision, and bear in mind that you have to make that decision before I leave you. I am to take your answer to him to-night; he is waiting in my rooms to receive it."

Then, softening down all that was harsh in the proposal and magnifying all its better points, Dr. Spenlove related to her what had passed between Mr. Gordon and himself. She listened in silence, and he could not judge from her demeanor whether he was to succeed or to fail. Frequently she turned her face from his tenderly searching gaze, as though more effectually to conceal her thoughts from him. When he finished *speaking* she showed that she had taken to heart his

counsel not to decide hastily, for she did not speak for several minutes. Then she said plaintively:

"There is no appeal, doctor?"

"None," he answered in a decisive tone.

"He sought you out and made you his messenger, because of his impression that you had influence with me, and would advise me for my good?"

"As I have told you—in his own words as nearly as I have been able to recall them."

"He was right. There is no man in the world I honor more than I honor you. I would accept what you say against my own convictions, against my own feelings. Advise me, doctor. My mind is distracted—I cannot be guided by it. You know what I am, you know what I have been, you foresee the future that lies before me. Advise me."

The moment he dreaded had arrived. The issue was with him. He felt that this woman's fate was in his hands.

"My advice is," he said in a low tone, "that you accept Mr. Gordon's offer."

"And cast aside a mother's duty?"

"What did you cast aside," he asked sadly, "when you went with your child on such a night as this toward the sea?"

She shuddered. She would not look at her child; with stern resolution she kept her eyes from wandering to the spot upon which the infant lay. She even moved away from the little body so that she should not come in contact with it.

A long silence ensued, which Dr. Spenlove dared not break.



"I cannot blame him," she then said, her voice now and again broken by a sob, "for making conditions. It is his respectability that is at stake, and he is noble and generous for taking such a risk upon himself. It would be mockery for me to say that I love my child with a love equal to that I should have felt if she had come into the world without the mark of shame with which I have branded her. With my love for her was mingled a loathing of myself, a terror of the living evidence of my fall. But I love her, doctor, I love her—and never yet so much as now when I am asked to part with her! What I did a while ago was done in a frenzy of despair; I had no food, you see, and she was crying for it; and the horror and the anguish of that hour may overpower me again if I am left as I am. I will accept Mr. Gordon's offer, and I will be as good a wife to him as it is in my power to be—but I, also, have a condition to make. Mr. Gordon is much older than I, and it may be that I shall outlive him. The condition I make is—and whatever the consequences I am determined to abide by it—that in the event of my husband's death and of there being no children of our union, I shall be free to seek the child I am called upon to desert. In everything else I will perform my part of the contract faithfully. Take my decision to Mr. Gordon, and if it is possible for you to return here to-night with his answer I implore you to do so. I cannot close my eyes, I cannot rest, until I hear the worst. God alone knows on which side lies the right, on which the wrong!"

"I will return with his answer," said Dr. Spenlove, "*to-night.*"

"There is still something more," she said in an imploring tone, "and it must be a secret sacredly kept between you and me. It may happen that you will become acquainted with the name of the guardian of my child. I have a small memorial which I desire she shall retain until she is of age, say until she is twenty-one, or until, in the event of my husband's death, I am free to seek her in years to come. If you do not discover who the guardian is I ask you to keep this memorial for me until I reclaim it—which may be never. Will you do this for me?"

"I will."

"Thank you for all your goodness to me. But I have nothing to put the memorial in. Could you add to your many kindnesses by giving me a small box which I can lock and secure? Dear Dr. Spenlove, it is a mother who will presently be torn from her child who implores you."

He bethought him of a small iron box he had at home, which contained some private papers of his own. He could spare this box without inconvenience to himself, and he promised to bring it to her—and so, with sincere words of consolation, he left her.

In the course of an hour he returned. Mr. Gordon had consented to the condition she imposed.

"Should I be thankful or not?" she asked wistfully.

"You should be thankful," he replied. "Your child, rest assured, will have a comfortable and happy home. Here is the box and the key. It is a patent lock—no other key will unlock it. I will show you how to use it. Yes, that is the way." He paused a moment, his

hand in his pocket. "You will be ready to meet Mr. Gordon at three to-morrow?"

"And my child?" she asked, with tears in her voice. "When will that be taken from me?"

"At twelve." His hand was still fumbling in his pocket, and he suddenly shook his head, as if indignant with himself. "You may want to purchase one or two little things in the morning. Here are a few shillings. Pray accept them."

He laid on the table the money with which he had intended to pay his fare to London.

"Heaven reward you," said the grateful woman, "and make your life bright and prosperous!"

Her tears bedewed his hand as she kissed it humbly, and Dr. Spenlove walked wearily home once more, penniless, but not unhappy.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### WHAT WAS PUT IN THE IRON BOX.

THE mother's vigil with her child on this last night was fraught with conflicting emotions of agony and rebellion. Upon Dr. Spenlove's departure she rose and dressed herself completely, all her thoughts and feelings being so engrossed by the impending separation that she took no heed of her damp clothes. She entertained no doubt that the renunciation was imperative and in the interests of her babe; nor did she doubt that the man who had dictated it was acting in simple justice to himself and perhaps in a spirit of mercy toward her; but she was in no mood to regard with gratitude one who in the most dread crisis in her life had saved her from destruction. The cause of this injustice lay in the fact that until this moment the true maternal instinct had not been awakened within her breast. As she had faithfully expressed it to Dr. Spenlove the birth of her babe had filled her with terror and with a loathing of herself. Had there been no consequences of her error apparent to the world she would have struggled on and might have been able to preserve her good name; her dishonor would not have been made clear to censorious eyes; but the living evidence of her shame was by her side, and, left to her own resources, she had conceived the idea that

death was her only refuge. Her acceptance of the better course that had been opened for her loosened the floodgates of tenderness for the child who was soon to be torn from her arms. Love and remorse shone in her eyes as she knelt by the bedside and fondled the little hands and kissed the innocent lips.

"Will you not wake, darling," she murmured, "and let me see your dear eyes? Wake, darling, wake! Do you not know what is going to happen? They are going to take you from me. We may never meet again—and if we do you have not even a name by which I can call you! But perhaps that will not matter. Surely you will know your mother, surely I shall know my child, and we shall fly to each other's arms! I want to tell you all this—I want you to hear it. Wake, sweet, sweet!"

The child slept on. Presently she murmured:

"It is hard, it is hard! How can God permit such cruelty?"

Half an hour passed in this way, and then she became more composed. Her mind, which had been unbalanced by her misfortunes, recovered its equilibrium, and she could reason with comparative calmness upon the future. In sorrow and pain she mentally mapped out the years to come. She saw her future, as she believed, a joyless life, a life of cold duty. She would not entertain the possibility of a brighter side—the possibility of her becoming reconciled to her fate, of her growing to love her husband, of her having other children who would be as dear to her as this one was. In the state of her feelings it seemed to her monstrous *to entertain such ideas, a wrong perpetrated upon the*

babe she was deserting. In dogged rebellion she hugged misery to her breast, and dwelt upon it as part of the punishment she had brought upon herself. There was no hope of happiness for her in the future, there was no ray of light to illumine her path. Forever would she be thinking of the child for whom she now, for the first time since its birth, felt a mother's love, and who was henceforth to find a home among strangers.

In this hopeless fashion did she muse for some time, and then a star appeared in her dark sky. She might, as she had suggested to Dr. Spenlove, survive her husband; it was more than possible—it was probable; and though there was in the contemplation a touch of treason toward the man who had come to her rescue, she derived satisfaction from it. In the event of his death she must adopt some steps to prove that the child was hers, and that she, and she alone, had the sole right to her. No stranger should keep her darling from her, should rob her of her reward for the sufferings she had undergone. It was for this reason that she had asked Dr. Spenlove for the iron box.

It was a compact, well-made box, and very heavy for its size. Any person receiving it as a precious deposit under the conditions she imposed might, when it was in his possession, reasonably believe that it contained mementoes of price, valuable jewels, perhaps, which she wished her child to wear when she grew to womanhood. She had no such treasure. Unlocking the box, she took from her pocket a letter, which she read with a bitterness which displayed itself strongly

in her face, which made her quiver with passionate indignation.

"The villain!" she muttered. "If he stood before me I would strike him dead at my feet!"

There was no lingering accent of tenderness in her voice. For the father of her child she had only feelings of hatred and scorn. Clearly she was a woman of strong passions, a woman who could love and hate in no niggardly fashion.

She tore the letter down in two uneven strips, and placed one strip in the box; the other she folded carefully and returned to her pocket. Then she locked the box, and tying the key with a piece of string, hung it round her neck and allowed it to fall, hidden in her bosom.

"If there is justice in heaven," she muttered, "a day will come!"

The portion of the letter which she had deposited in the box read as follows:

"MY DARLING:

    "My heart is  
dear girl that I do no  
can express my feelings  
would be powerless to ex  
will show my deep love in  
life shall be devoted to t  
of making you happy. Neve  
have occasion for one moment  
that you have consented to be  
I have thoroughly convinced yo  
*marriage with Mr. Gordon would b*

of bringing the deepest misery up  
be truly a living death. With me  
be filled with love and sunshine. N  
be allowed to darken it. As your p  
as your devoted husband, I solemnly sw  
will forever shield and guard you. In  
hours our new and joyful life will be com  
Meet me to-morrow night at the appointed p  
and be careful not to whisper a word of you  
flight to a living soul. The least suspicio  
certainly ruin your happiness and mine. And  
sure that you burn this letter as you have bur  
With fond and everlasting love, believe me, my o  
be forever and ever your faithful and constant l

Putting the iron box on the table she sat by the bed-side, her eyes fixed upon her child. Her thoughts, shaped in words, ran somewhat in this fashion:

"In a few hours she will be taken from me; in a few short hours we shall be separated, and then, and then—ah! how can I think of it?—an ocean of waters will divide us. She will not miss me, she does not know me. She will receive another woman's endearments; she will never bestow a thought upon me, her wretched mother, and I—I shall be forever thinking of her! She is all my own now; presently I shall have no claim upon her. Would it not be better to end it as I had intended—to end it now, this moment?" She rose to her feet, and stood with her lips tightly pressed and her hands convulsively clenched; and then she cried in horror: "No, no! I dare not—I dare not! It would be murder, and he said that God would not forgive me.



Oh, my darling, my darling, it is merciful that you are a baby, and do not know what is passing in my mind! If you do not love me now you may in the future, when I shall be free, and then you shall feel how different is a mother's love from the love of a strange woman. But how shall I recognize you if you are a woman before we meet again; how shall I prove to you, to the world, that you are truly mine? Your eyes will be black, as mine are, and your hair, I hope, will be as dark, but there are thousands like that. I am grateful that you resemble me, and not your base father, whom I pray God to strike and punish. Oh, that it were ever in my power to repay him for his treachery, to say to him, 'As you dragged me down so do I drag you down! As you ruined my life so do I ruin yours!' But I cannot hope for that. The woman weeps, the man laughs. Never mind, child, never mind. If in future years we are reunited it will be happiness enough. Dark hair, black eyes, small hands and feet—oh, darling, darling!" She covered the little hands and feet with kisses. "And yes, yes"—with feverish eagerness she gazed at the child's neck—"these two tiny moles, like those on my neck—I shall know you, I shall know you, I shall be able to prove that you are my daughter."

With a lighter heart she resumed her seat, and set to work mending the infant's scanty clothing, which she fondled and kissed as though it had sense and feeling. A church clock in the distance tolled five; she had been listening for the hour, hoping it was earlier.

"Five o'clock," she muttered. "I thought it was *not later than three*. I am being robbed. Oh, if time

would only stand still! Five o'clock. In seven hours she will be taken from me. Seven hours—seven short hours! I will not close my eyes."

But after a while her lids dropped, and she was not conscious of it. The abnormal fatigues of the day and night, the relaxing of the overstrung nerves, the warmth of the room, produced their effect; her head sank upon the bed, and she fell into a dreamful sleep.

It was merciful that her dreaming fancies were not drawn from the past. The psychological cause of her slumbers being beguiled by bright visions may be found in the circumstance that, despite the conflicting passions to which she had proved she was too prone to yield, the worldly ease which was secured to her and her child by Mr. Gordon's offer had removed a heavy weight from her heart. In her visions she saw her baby grow into a happy girlhood, she had glimpses of holiday times when they were together in the fields, or by the seaside, or walking in the glow of lovely sunsets, gathering flowers in the hush of the woods, or winding their way through the golden corn. From girlhood to womanhood in these fair dreams her baby passed, and happy smiles wreathed the lips of the woe-worn woman as she lay in her poor garments on the humble bed by the side of her child.

"Do you love me, darling?" asked the sleeping mother.

"Dearly, dearly," answered the dream child. "With my whole heart, mother."

"Call me mother again. It is like the music of the angels."

"Mother—mother!"

"You will love me always, darling?"

"Always, mother; forever and ever and ever."

"Say that you will never love me less, that you will never forget me."

"I will never love you less. I will never forget you."

"Darling child, how beautiful you are! There is not in the world a lovelier woman. It is for me to protect and guard you. I can do so—I have had experience. Come—let us rest."

They sat upon a mossy bank, and the mother folded her arms around her child, who lay slumbering on her breast.

There had been a few blissful days in this woman's life, during which she had believed in man's faithfulness and God's goodness, but the dreaming hours she was now enjoying were fraught with a heavenly gladness. Nature and dreams are the fairies of the poor and the afflicted.

She awoke as the church clock chimed eight. Again had she to face the stern realities of life. The sad moment of separation was fast approaching.

## CHAPTER IX.

### MR. MOSS PLAYS HIS PART.

AT five o'clock on the afternoon of that day Dr. Spenlove returned to his apartments. Having given away the money with which he had intended to pay his fare to London, he had bethought him of a gentleman living in Southsea of whom he thought he could borrow a sovereign or two for a few weeks. He had walked the distance, and had met with disappointment; the gentleman was absent on business and might be absent several days.

"Upon my word," said the good doctor as he drearily retraced his steps, "it is almost as bad as being shipwrecked. Worse, because there are no railways on desert islands. What on earth am I to do? Get to London I must, by hook or by crook, and there is absolutely nothing I can turn into money."

Then he bethought himself of Mr. Moss, and in his extremity determined to make an appeal in that quarter. Had it not been for what had occurred last night he would not have dreamed of going to this gentleman, of whose goodness of heart he had had no previous experience, and upon whose kindness he had not the slightest claim. Arriving at Mr. Moss' establishment, another disappointment attended him; Mr. Moss was *not at home*, and they could not say when

he would return. So Dr. Spenlove, greatly depressed, walked slowly on, his mind distressed with troubles and perplexities.

He had seen nothing more of Mr. Gordon, who had left him in the early morning with a simple acknowledgment in words of the services he had rendered; nor had he seen anything further of Mrs. Turner. On his road home he called at her lodgings, and heard from her fellow-lodger that she had left the house.

"We don't know where she's gone to, sir," the woman said, "but the rent has been paid up, and a sovereign was slipped under my door. If it wasn't that she was so hard up I should have thought it came from her."

"I have no doubt it did," Dr. Spenlove answered. "She has friends who are well to do, and I know that one of these friends, discovering her position, was anxious to assist her."

"I am glad to hear it," said the woman, "and it was more than kind of her to remember me. I always had an idea that she was above us."

As he was entering his room his landlady ran up from the kitchen.

"Oh, doctor, there's a parcel and two letters for you in your room, and Mr. Moss has been here to see you. He said he would come again."

"Very well, Mrs. Radcliffe," said Dr. Spenlove, and cheered by the news of the promised visit he passed into his apartment. On the table were the letters and the parcel. The latter, carefully wrapped in thick brown paper, was the iron box he had given to Mrs. Turner. *One of the letters was in her handwriting, and it in-*

formed him that her child had been taken away, and that she was on the point of leaving Portsmouth.

"I am not permitted," the letter ran, "to inform you where I am going, and I am under the obligation of not writing to you personally after I leave this place. This letter is sent without the knowledge of the gentleman for whom you acted, and I do not consider myself bound to tell him that I have written it. What I have promised to do I will do faithfully, but nothing further. You who, of all men in the world, perhaps know me best will understand what I am suffering as I pen these lines. I send with this letter the box you were kind enough to give me last night. It contains the memorial of which I spoke to you. Dear Dr. Spence, I rely upon you to carry out my wishes with respect to it. If you are acquainted with the guardian of my child convey it to him, and beg him to retain it until my darling is of age, or until I am free to seek her. It is not in your nature to refuse the petition of a heartbroken mother; it is not in your nature to violate a promise. For all the kindnesses you have shown me receive my grateful and humble thanks. That you will be happy and successful, and that God will prosper you in all your undertakings, will be my constant prayer. Farewell."

Laying this letter aside he opened the second, which was in a handwriting strange to him:

"DEAR SIR: All my arrangements are made, and the business upon which we spoke together is satisfactorily concluded. You will find inclosed a practical expression of my thanks. I do not give you my

address for two reasons. First, I desire no acknowledgment of the inclosure; second, I desire that there shall be no correspondence between us upon any subject. Feeling perfectly satisfied that the confidence I reposed in you will be respected, I am,

"Your obedient servant,

"G. GORDON."

The inclosure consisted of five Bank of England notes for twenty pounds each. Dr. Spenlove was very much astonished and very much relieved. At this juncture the money was a fortune to him; there was a likelihood of its proving the turning point in his career; and although it had not been earned in the exercise of his profession, he had no scruple in accepting it. The generosity of the donor was, moreover, in some sense an assurance that he was sincere in all the professions he had made.

"Mr. Moss, sir," said Mrs. Radcliffe, opening the door, and that gentleman entered the room.

As usual he was humming an operatic air, but he ceased as he closed the door, which, after a momentary pause, he reopened to convince himself that the landlady was not listening in the passage.

"Can't be too careful, doctor," he observed, with a wink, "when you have something you want to keep to yourself. You have been running after me and I have been running after you. Did you wish to see me particularly?"

"To tell you the truth," replied Dr. Spenlove, "I had a special reason for calling upon you, but," he added, with a smile, "*as it no longer exists I need not trouble you.*"

"No trouble, no trouble at all. I am at your service, doctor. Anything I could have done, or can do now, to oblige, you may safely reckon upon. Within limits, you know, within limits."

"Of course, but the necessity is obviated. I intended to ask you to lend me a small sum of money—without security, Mr. Moss."

"I guessed as much. You should have had it, doctor, and no inquiries made, though it isn't the way I usually conduct my business; but there are men you can trust and are inclined to trust, and there are men you wouldn't trust without binding them down hard and fast. If you still need the money don't be afraid to ask."

"I should not be afraid, but I am in funds. I am not the less indebted to you, Mr. Moss."

"All right. Now for another affair—*my* affair I suppose I must call it till I have shifted it to other shoulders, which will soon be done. Dr. Spenlove, that was a strange adventure last night."

"It was. A strange and sad adventure. You behaved very kindly, and I should like to repay what you expended on behalf of the poor lady."

"No, no, doctor, let it rest where it is. I don't acknowledge your right to repay what you don't owe, and perhaps I am none the worse off for what I did. Throw your bread on the waters, you know. My present visit has reference to the lady—as you call her one I will do the same—we picked out of the snow last night. Did you ever notice that things go in runs?"

"I don't quite follow you."



"A run of rainy weather, a run of fine weather, a run of good fortune, a run of ill fortune."

"I understand."

"You meet a person to-day whom you have never seen or heard of before. The odds are that you will meet that person to-morrow, and probably the next day as well. You begin to have bad cards, you go on having bad cards; you begin to make money, you go on making money."

"You infer that there are seasons of circumstances, as of weather. No doubt you are right."

"I know I am right. Making the acquaintance of your friend Mrs. Turner last night in a very extraordinary manner, I am not at all surprised that I have business in hand in which she is concerned. You look astonished, but it is true. You gave her a good character, doctor."

"Which she deserves. It happens in life to the best of us that we cannot avert misfortune. It is a visitor that does not knock at the door; it enters unannounced."

"We have unlocked the door ourselves, perhaps," suggested Mr. Moss sagely.

"It happens sometimes in a moment of trustfulness, deceived by specious professions. The weak and confiding become the victims."

"It is the way of the world, doctor. Hawks and pigeons, you know."

"There are some who are neither," said Dr. Spenser who was not disposed to hurry his visitor. His was easy as to his departure from Portsmouth, *lived from the course the conversation was*

taking that Mr. Moss had news of a special nature to communicate. He deemed it wisest to allow him to break it in his own way.

"They are the best off," responded Mr. Moss; "brains well balanced—an even scale, doctor—then you can steer straight, and to your own advantage. Women are the weakest, as you say; too much heart, too much sentiment. All very well in its proper place, but it weighs one side of the scale down. Mrs. Moss isn't much better than other women in that respect. She has her whims and crotchets, and doesn't always take the business view."

"Implying that you do, Mr. Moss?"

"Of course I do; should be ashamed of myself if I didn't. What do I live for? Business. What do I live by? Business. What do I enjoy most? Business—and plenty of it." He rubbed his hands together joyously. "I should like to paint on my shop door, 'Mr. Moss, Business Man.' People would know it would be no use trying to get the best of me. They don't get it as it is."

"You are unjust to yourself. Was it business last night that made you pay the cabman, and sent you out to buy coals and food for an unfortunate creature you had never seen before?"

"That was a little luxury," said Mr. Moss, with a sly chuckle, "which we business men engage in occasionally to sharpen up our faculties. It is an investment, and it pays; it puts us on good terms with ourselves. If you think I have a bit of sentiment in me you are mistaken."

"I paint your portrait for myself," protested Dr.

Spenlove, "and I shall not allow you to disfigure it. Granted that you keep, as a rule, to the main road. Business Road we will call it, if you like——"

"Very good, doctor, very good."

"You walk along driving bargains, and making money honestly——"

"Thank you, doctor," interposed Mr. Moss rather gravely. "There are people who don't do us so much justice."

"When unexpectedly," continued Dr. Spenlove with tender gayety, "you chance upon a little narrow path to the right or left of you, and your eye lighting on it, you observe a stretch of woodland, a touch of bright color, a picture of human suffering, that appeals to your poetical instinct, to your musical tastes, or to your humanity. Down you plunge toward it, to the confusion for the time being of Business Road and its business attractions."

"Sir," said Mr. Moss, bending his head with a dignity which did not set ill on him, "if all men were of your mind the narrow prejudices of creed would stand a bad chance of making themselves felt. But we are wandering from the main road of the purpose which brought me here. I have not said a word to Mrs. Moss of the adventure of last night; I don't know why, because a better creature doesn't breathe, but I gathered from you in some way that you would prefer we should keep it to ourselves. Mrs. Moss never complains of my being out late; she rather encourages me, and that will give you an idea of the good wife she is. 'Enjoyed yourself, Moss?' she asked when I got home. 'Very much,' I answered, and that was all. Now, doctor, a

business man wouldn't be worth his salt if he wasn't a thinking man as well. After I was dressed this morning I thought a good deal of the lady and her child, and I came to the conclusion that you took more than an ordinary interest in them."

"You are right," said Dr. Spenlove.

"Following your lead, which is a good thing to do if you've confidence in your partner, I found myself taking more than an ordinary interest in them, but as it wasn't a game of whist we were playing I had no clew to the cards you held. You will see presently what I am leading up to. While I was thinking and going over some stock which I am compelled by law to put up to auction, I received a message that a gentleman wished to see me on very particular private business. It was then about half-past nine, and the gentleman remained with me about an hour. When he went away he made an appointment with me to meet him at a certain place at twelve o'clock. I met him there; he had a carriage waiting. I got in, and where do you think he drove me?"

"I would rather you answered the question yourself," said Dr. Spenlove, his interest in the conversation receiving an exciting stimulus.

"The carriage, doctor, stopped at the house to which we conveyed your lady friend and her child last night. I opened my eyes, I can tell you. Now, not to beat about the bush, I will make you acquainted with the precise nature of the business the gentleman had with me."

"Pardon me a moment," said Dr. Spenlove. "Was Mr. Gordon the gentleman?"

"You have named him," said Mr. Moss, and perceiving that Dr. Spenlove was about to speak again, he contented himself with answering the question. But the doctor did not proceed; his first intention had been to inquire whether the business was confidential, and if so to decline to listen to the disclosure which his visitor desired to make. A little consideration, however, inclined him to the opinion that this might be carrying delicacy too far. He was in the confidence of both Mr. Gordon and Mrs. Turner, and it might be prejudicial to the mother and her child if he closed his ears to the issue of the strange adventure. He waved his hand, thereby inviting Mr. Moss to continue.

"Just so, doctor," said Mr. Moss in the tone of a man who had disposed of an objection. "It is a singular affair, but I have been mixed up in all kinds of queer transactions in my time, and I always give a man the length of his rope. What induced Mr. Gordon to apply to me is his concern, not mine. Perhaps he had heard a good report of me, and I am much obliged to those who gave it; perhaps he thought I was a tradesman who would take anything in pledge, from a flatiron to a flesh and blood baby. Anyway, if I chose to regard his visit as a compliment it is because I am not thin skinned. Mr. Gordon informed me that he wished to find a home and to provide for a young baby whose mother could not look after it, being imperatively called away to a distant part of the world. Had it not been that the terms he proposed were extraordinarily liberal, and that he gave me the names of an eminent firm of lawyers in London, who *had undertaken* the financial part of the business—and

had it not been, also, that as he spoke to me I thought of a friend whom it might be in my power to serve—I should have shut him up at once by saying that I was not a baby farmer, and by requesting him to take his leave. Interrupting myself, and as it was you who first mentioned the name of Mr. Gordon, I think I am entitled to ask if you are acquainted with him?"

"You are entitled to ask the question. I am acquainted with him."

"Since when, doctor?"

"Since last night only."

"Before we met?"

"Yes, before we met."

"May I inquire if you were then acting for Mr. Gordon?"

"To some extent. Had it not been for him I should not have gone in search of her."

"In which case," said Mr. Moss in a grave tone, "she and her child would have been found dead in the snow. That is coming to first causes, doctor. I have not been setting a trap for you in putting these questions; I have been testing Mr. Gordon's veracity. When I asked him whether I was the only person in Portsmouth whom he had consulted he frankly answered I was not. Upon this I insisted upon his telling me who this other person was. After some hesitation he said, 'Dr. Spenlove.' Any scruples I may have had were instantly dispelled, for I knew that it was impossible you could be mixed up in a business which had not a good end."

"I thank you."

"Hearing your name, I thought at once of the lady

and her child whom we were instrumental in saving. Am I right in my impression that you are in possession of the conditions and terms Mr. Gordon imposes?"

"I am."

"Then I need not go into them. I take it, Dr. Spenlove, that you do not consider the business disreputable."

"It is not disreputable. Mr. Gordon is a peculiar man, and his story in connection with the lady in question is a singular one. He is not the father of the child, and the action he has taken is not prompted by a desire to rid himself of a responsibility. On the contrary, out of regard for the lady he has taken upon himself a very heavy responsibility, which I have little doubt—none, indeed—that he will honorably discharge."

"I will continue. Having heard what Mr. Gordon had to say—thinking all the time of the friend who might be induced to adopt the child, and that I might be able to serve him—I put the gentleman to the test. Admitting that his terms were liberal, I said that a sum of money ought to be paid down at once, in proof of his good faith. 'How much?' he asked. 'Fifty pounds,' I answered. He instantly produced the sum in banknotes. Then it occurred to me that it would make things still safer if I had an assurance from the eminent firm of London lawyers that the business was honorable, and met with their approval; and if I also had a notification from them that they were prepared to pay the money regularly. 'Send them a telegram,' suggested Mr. Gordon, 'and make it full and complete. *I will write a shorter one, which you can send at the*

same time. Let the answers be addressed here, and open them both yourself when they arrive, which should be before twelve o'clock.' The telegrams written, I took them to the office; and before twelve came the replies, which were perfectly satisfactory. Everything appeared to be so straightforward that I undertook the business. A singular feature in it is that Mr. Gordon does not wish to know with whom the child is placed. 'My lawyers will make inquiries,' he said, 'and they will be content if the people are respectable.' Dr. Spenlove, I thought it right that you should be informed of what I have done; you have expressed your approval, and I am satisfied. Don't you run away with the idea that I have acted philanthropically. Nothing of the kind, sir; I have been paid for my trouble. And now, if you would like to ask any questions, fire away."

"Were no conditions of secrecy imposed upon you?"

"Yes, but I said I was bound to confide in one person. He may have thought I meant Mrs. Moss, but it was you I had in my mind. I promised that it should go no farther, and I do not intend that it shall. Mrs. Moss will be none the worse for not being let into the secret."

"Where is the child now?"

"In the temporary care of a respectable woman who is providing suitable clothing for it, Mr. Gordon having given me money for the purpose."

"He has not spared his purse. When do you propose taking the child to her new home?"

"To-night."

"They are good people?"



"The best in the world. She cannot help being happy with them."

"Do they live in Portsmouth?"

"No, in Gosport. I think this is as much as I have the right to disclose."

"I agree with you. Mr. Moss, you can render me an obligation, and you can do a kindness to the poor child's mother. She has implored me to endeavor to place this small iron box in the care of the guardians of her child, to be retained by them for twenty-one years, or until the mother claims it, which she will be free to do in the event of her husband dying during her lifetime. I do not know what it contains, and I understand it is to be given up to no other person than the child or her mother. Will you do this for me or for her?"

"For both of you, doctor," replied Mr. Moss, lifting the box from the table. "It shall be given into their care, as the mother desires. And now I must be off. I have a busy night before me. Do you go to London to-morrow?"

"A train leaves in a couple of hours; I shall travel by that."

"Well, good-night, and good luck to you. If you want to write to me you know my address."

They parted with cordiality, and each took his separate way, Dr. Spenlove to the City of Unrest, and Mr. Moss to the peaceful town of Gosport.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE VISION IN THE CHURCHYARD.

SOME twelve months before the occurrence of the events recorded in the preceding chapters a Jew, bearing the name of Aaron Cohen, had come to reside in the ancient town of Gosport. He was accompanied by his wife Rachel. They had no family, and their home was a home of love.

They were comparatively young, Aaron being twenty-eight and Rachel twenty-three, and they had been married five years. Hitherto they had lived in London, and the cause of their taking up their residence in Gosport was that Aaron had conceived the idea that he could establish himself there in a good way of business. One child had blessed their union, whom they called Benjamin. There was great rejoicing at his birth, and it would have been difficult to calculate how many macaroons and almond and butter cakes, and cups of chocolate, and glasses of aniseed were sacrificed upon the altar of hospitality in the happy father's house for several days after the birth of his firstborn. "Aaron Cohen does it in style," said the neighbors, and as both he and Rachel were held in genuine respect by all who knew them, the encomium was not mere empty praise. Seldom even in the locality in which the Cohens then resided—the east end of London, where charity and hospitality are pro-

verbial—had such feasting been seen at the celebration of a circumcision. "If he lived in Bayswater," said the company, "he couldn't have treated us better." And when the father lifted up his voice and said, "Blessed art thou, the Eternal, our God, King of the universe, who hath sanctified us with his commandments, and commanded us to introduce our sons into the covenant of our father Abraham," there was more than usual sincerity in the response, "Even as this child has now entered this covenant, so may he be initiated into the covenant of the law, of marriage, and of good works." Perhaps among those assembled there were some who could not have translated into English the Hebrew prayers they read so glibly, but this reproach did not apply to Aaron, who was an erudite as well as an orthodox Jew, and understood every word he uttered. On this memorable day the feasting commenced in the morning, and continued during the whole day. "I wish you joy, Cohen, I wish you joy"—this was the formula, a hundred and a hundred times repeated to the proud father, who really believed that a prince had been born among Israel; while the pale-faced mother, pressing her infant tenderly to her breast, and who in her maidenhood had never looked so beautiful as now, received in her bedroom the congratulations of her intimate female friends. The poorest people in the neighborhood were welcomed, and if the seed of good wishes could have blossomed into flower a rose-strewn path of life lay before the child.

"He shall be the son of my right hand," said Aaron Cohen; and Rachel, as she kissed her child's mouth, *and tasted its sweet breath*, believed that Heaven had

descended upon earth, and that no mother had ever been blessed as she was blessed. This precious treasure was the crowning of their love, and they laid schemes for baby's youth and manhood before the child was out of long clothes—schemes destined not to be realized.

For sixteen months Benjamin filled the hearts of his parents with ineffable joy, and then the Angel of Death entered their house and bore the young soul away. How they mourned for the dear one who was nevermore on earth to rejoice them with his beautiful ways need not here be related; all parents who have lost their firstborn will realize the bitterness of their grief.

But not for long was this grief bitter. In the wise and reverent interpretation of Aaron Cohen their loss became a source of consolation to them. "Let us not rebel," he said to his wife, "against the inevitable and divine will. Give praise unto the Lord, who has ordained that we shall have a child in heaven waiting to receive us." Fraught with tenderness and wisdom were his words, and his counsel instilled comfort into Rachel's heart. Benjamin was waiting for them, and would meet them at the gates. Beautiful was the thought, radiant the hope it raised, never, never to fade, nay, to grow brighter even to her dying hour. Their little child, dead and in his grave, brought them nearer to God. Heaven and earth were linked by the spirit of their beloved, who had gone before them; thus was sorrow sweetened, and happiness chastened by faith.

Sitting on their low stools during the days of mourning, they spoke, when they were alone, of the peace and joy of the eternal life, and thereby were drawn

spiritually closer to each other. The lesson they learned in the darkened room was more precious than jewels and gold; it is a lesson which comes to all, high and low alike, and rich indeed are they who learn it aright. For some time thereafter, when the mother opened the drawer in which her most precious possessions were kept, and kissed the little shoes her child had worn, she would murmur amid her tears:

"My darling is waiting for me—my darling is waiting for me!"

God send to all sorrowing mothers a comfort so sweet!

Aaron Cohen had selected a curious spot in Gosport for his habitation. The windows of the house he had taken overlooked the quaint, peaceful churchyard of the market town. So small and pretty was this resting place for the dead that one might almost have imagined it to be a burial ground for children's broken toys. The headless wooden soldiers, the battered dolls, the maimed contents of cheap Noah's arks, the thousand and one treasures of childhood, might have been interred there, glad to be at rest after the ruthless mutilations they had undergone. For really, in the dawning white light of a frosty morning, when every object for miles around sharply outlined itself in the clear air and seemed to have lost its rotund proportions, it was hard to realize that, in this tiny churchyard, men and women whose breasts once throbbed with the passions and sorrows of life should be crumbling to that dust to which we must all return. No, no; it could be nothing but the last home of plain and *painted shepherds*, and bald-headed pets, and lambs

devoid of fleece, and mayhap—a higher flight which we all hope to take when the time comes for us to claim our birthright of the grave—of a dead bullfinch or canary, carried thither on its back, with its legs sticking heavenward, and buried with grown-up solemnity, and very often with all the genuineness of grief for a mortal bereavement. Have you not attended such a funeral, and has not your overcharged heart caused you to sob in your dreams as you lay in your cot close to mamma's bed?

But these fantastic fancies will not serve. It was a real human churchyard, and Rachel Cohen knew it to be so as she stood looking out upon it from the window of her bedroom on the first floor. It was from no feeling of unhappiness that her sight became dimmed as she gazed upon the tombstones. Shadows of children rose before her, the pattering of whose little feet was once the sweetest music that ever fell on parent's ears, the touch of whose little hands carried with it an influence as powerful as a heart-stirring prayer; children with golden curls, children with laughing eyes, children with wistful faces—but there was one, ah! there was one that shone as a star amid the shadows, and that rose up, up, till it was lost in the solemn clouds, sending therefrom a divine message down to the mother's heart: "Mamma, mamma, I am waiting for thee!"

Quiet as was everything around her, Rachel heard the words; in the midst of the darkness a heavenly light was shining on her.

She wiped the tears from her eyes, and stole down to the room in which her husband was sitting.

## CHAPTER XI.

### MR. WHIMPOLE INTRODUCES HIMSELF.

IT was the front room of the house on the ground floor which Aaron Cohen had converted into a shop. The small parlor windows had been replaced by larger ones, a counter had been put up, behind which were shelves fitted into the walls. These shelves at present were bare, but Aaron hoped to see them filled. Under the counter were other shelves, as empty as those on the walls.

When Rachel entered her husband was engaged counting out his money, like the king in his counting house. There was a studious expression on his face, which was instantly replaced by one of deep tenderness as he looked up and saw traces of tears in her eyes. He gathered his money together, banknotes, silver, gold, and coppers, and motioned her into the room at the rear of the shop. This was their living room, but a large iron safe in a corner denoted that it was not to be devoted entirely to domestic affairs. In another corner was the symbol of his business, which was to be affixed to the front of the premises, over the shop door—the familiar device of three golden balls.

Letting his money fall upon the table, he drew his wife to his side, and passed his arm round her.

"The house," he said, "is almost in order."

"*Yes, Aaron; there is very little to do.*"

"I am also ready for business. I have the license, and to-morrow those glittering balls will be put up and the name painted. They are rather large for so small a shop, but they will attract all the more attention." He gazed at her anxiously. "Do you think you will be contented and happy here?"

"Contented and happy anywhere with you," she replied in a tone of the deepest affection.

"In this town especially, Rachel?"

"Yes, in this town especially. It is so peaceful."

"But," he said, touching her eyes with his fingers, "these?"

"Not because I am unhappy," she said, and her voice was low and sweet. "I was looking out upon the churchyard from our bedroom window."

"Ah!" he said, and he kissed her eyes.

He divined the cause of her tears, and there was much tenderness in his utterance of the monosyllable and in the kisses he gave her. Man and wife for five years, they were still the fondest of lovers.

"My dear," said Aaron presently, "the spirit of prophecy is upon me. We shall lead a comfortable life in this town; we shall prosper in this house. It was a piece of real good fortune my hitting upon it. When I heard by chance that the man who lived here owned the lease and wished to dispose of it I hesitated before parting with so large a sum as a hundred pounds for the purchase. It was nearly half my capital, but I liked the look of the place, and a little bird whispered that we should be lucky in it, so I made the venture. I am certain we shall not regret it. There is a knock at the street door."



"Who can it be?" asked Rachel anxiously. "We know no one in Gosport, and it is night."

"Which is no excuse for our not opening the door," said Aaron Cohen, sweeping the money off the table into a small chamois leather bag, which he tied carefully at the neck, and put into his pocket. "True we believe we are not known here, but there may nevertheless be an old acquaintance in Gosport who has heard of our arrival, and comes to welcome us; or Judah Belasco may have told a friend of his we are here; or it may be an enterprising baker or grocer who wishes to secure our custom. No," he added as the knock was repeated, "that is not a tradesman. Let us see who it is that expresses himself so impatiently."

Aaron went to the street door, and Rachel followed him into the passage, carrying a candle. The night was dark, and Rachel stood a little in the rear, so that Aaron could not distinguish the features of his visitor. He was a big man, and that was all that was apparent to the Cohens.

"Mr. Cohen?" queried the visitor.

"Yes," said Aaron.

"Mr. Aaron Cohen?"

"That is my name."

"Can I speak with you?"

"Certainly." And Aaron waited to hear what the stranger had to say.

"I am not accustomed to be kept waiting on the doorstep. I should prefer to speak to you in the house."

*Rachel, who was naturally timid, moved closer to*

her husband, who took the candle from her hand, and held it up in order to see the face of the stranger.

"Step inside," he said.

The stranger followed Aaron and Rachel into the little parlor, and without taking off his hat, looked at Aaron, then at Rachel, and then into every corner of the room; the last object upon which his eyes rested was the device of the three golden balls, and a frown gathered on his features as he gazed. Aaron noted these movements and signs with attention and amusement.

"Do you detect any blemish in them?" he asked.

"I do not understand you," said the stranger.

"In those balls. There was an expression of disapproval on your face as you gazed on them."

"I disapprove of them altogether," said the stranger.

"I am sorry, but we cannot please everybody. I am not responsible for the insignia; you will find the origin in the armorial bearings of the Medici. That is a beautiful hat you have on your head." The stranger stared at him. "Really," continued Aaron blandly, "a beautiful hat; a fine protection against the hot rays of the sun; a protection, also, against the wind and rain. But in this room, as you may observe, we have neither wind nor rain nor sun." The stranger, reddening slightly, removed his hat, and placed it on the table. "My wife," then said Aaron.

The stranger inclined his head, with the air of a man acknowledging an introduction to one of a lower station. The manner of this acknowledgment was not lost upon Aaron.

"My wife," he repeated courteously, "Mrs. Cohen."

"I see," said the stranger, glancing again at Rachel with condescension. "With your permission I will take a seat."

It was distinctly at variance with the hospitable instincts of Aaron Cohen that he did not respond to this request.

"You have the advantage of us," he said. "I have had the pleasure of introducing my wife to you. Afford me the pleasure of introducing you to my wife."

Somewhat stiffly the stranger handed Aaron a visiting card, upon which was inscribed the name of Mr. Edward Whimpole, and in a corner the word, "Churchwarden." Mr. Whimpole's movements were slow, and intended to be dignified, but Aaron exhibited no impatience.

"My dear, Mr. Edward Whimpole, churchwarden."

Rachel bowed gracefully, and Aaron, with an easy motion of his hand, invited Mr. Whimpole to a chair, in which he seated himself. Then Aaron placed a chair for his wife, and took one himself, and prepared to listen to what Mr. Whimpole had to say.

Mr. Whimpole was a large-framed man with a great deal of flesh on his face; his eyes were light, and he had no eyebrows worth speaking of. The best feature in his face was his mouth, and the most insignificant his nose, which was really not a fair nose for a man of his build. It was an added injury inflicted upon him by nature that it was very thin at the end, as though it had been planed on both sides. But then, as Aaron had occasion to remark, we don't make our own noses. *A distinct contrast* presented itself in the two noses

which, if the figure of speech may be allowed, now faced each other.

Mr. Whimpole had not disclosed the nature of his visit, but he had already made it clear that he was not graciously disposed toward the Jew; the only effect this had upon Aaron was to render him exceedingly affable. Perhaps he scented a bargain, and was aware that mental irritation would interfere with the calm exercise of his judgment in a matter of buying and selling:

"May I inquire," he said, pointing to the word "churchwarden" on the card, "whether this is your business or profession?"

"I am a cornchandler," said Mr. Whimpole.

"Churchwarden, my dear," said Aaron, addressing his wife in a pleasant tone, "*and* cornchandler."

For the life of him Mr. Whimpole could not have explained to the satisfaction of those not directly interested why he was angry at the reception he was meeting. That Aaron Cohen was not the kind of man he had expected to meet would not have been accepted as a sufficient reason.

"I am not mistaken," said Mr. Whimpole, with a flush of resentment, "in believing you to be a Jew?"

"You are not mistaken," replied Aaron with exceeding urbanity. "I am a Jew. If I were not proud of the fact it would be folly to attempt to disguise it, for at least one feature in my face would betray me."

"It would," said Mr. Whimpole, dealing a blow which had the effect of causing Aaron to lean back in his chair, and laugh gently to himself for fully thirty seconds.

"When you have quite finished," said Mr. Whimpole coldly, "we will proceed."

"Excuse me," said Aaron, drawing a deep breath of enjoyment. "I beg you will not consider me wanting in politeness, but I have the instincts of my race, and I never waste the smallest trifle, not even a joke."

A little tuft of hair which ran down the center of Mr. Whimpole's head—the right and left banks of which were devoid of verdure—quivered in sympathy with the proprietor's astonishment. That a man should make a joke out of that which was generally considered to be a reproach and a humiliation was, indeed, matter for amazement, nay, in this instance, for indignation, for in Aaron Cohen's laughter he, Mr. Whimpole himself, was made to occupy a ridiculous place.

"We are loath," continued Aaron, "to waste even the thinnest joke. We are at once both thrifty and liberal."

"We!" exclaimed Mr. Whimpole in hot repudiation.

"We Jews, I mean. No person in the world could possibly mistake you for one of the chosen."

"I should hope not. The idea is too absurd."

"Make your mind easy, sir; you would not pass muster in a synagogue without exciting remark. Yes, we are both thrifty and liberal, wasting nothing, and in the free spending of our money seeing that we get good value for it. That is not a reproach, nor is it a reproach that we thoroughly enjoy an agreeable thing when we get it for nothing. There are so many things in life to vex us that the opportunity of a good laugh should never be neglected. Proceed, my dear sir, proceed; you were saying that you believed you were not *mistaken in taking me for a Jew.*"

"Is it your intention," asked Mr. Whimpole, coming now straight to the point, "to reside in Gosport?"

"If I am permitted," replied Aaron meekly.

"I hear, Mr. Cohen, that you have purchased the lease of this house."

"It is true, sir. The money has been paid and the lease is mine."

"It has twenty-seven years to run."

"Twenty-seven years and three months. Who can tell where we shall be, and how we shall be situated at the end of that time?"

Mr. Whimpole waved the contemplation aside. "You gave a hundred pounds for the lease."

"The precise sum; your information is correct."

"I had some intention, Mr. Cohen, of buying it myself."

"Indeed. It is a case of the early bird, then."

"If it gratifies you to put it that way. I have, therefore, no option but to purchase the lease of you."

"Mr. Whimpole," said Aaron after a slight pause, "I am agreeable to sell you the lease."

"I thought as much." And Mr. Whimpole disposed himself comfortably in his chair.

Rachel's eyes dilated in surprise. Their settlement in Gosport had not been made in haste, and all arrangements for commencing business were made. She could not understand her husband's willingness to give up the house.

"I do not expect you to take what you gave for it," said Mr. Whimpole; "I am prepared to give you a profit, and," he added jocosely, "you will not be backward in accepting it."

"Not at all backward. You speak like a man of sense."

"How much do you want for your bargain? How much, Mr. Cohen? Don't open your mouth too wide."

"If you will permit me," said Aaron, and he proceeded to pencil down a calculation. "It is not an undesirable house, Mr. Whimpole?"

"No, no; I don't say it is."

"It is compact and convenient?"

"Fairly so, fairly so!"

"I will accept," said Aaron, having finished his calculation, "five hundred pounds."

"You cannot be in earnest!" gasped Mr. Whimpole, his breath fairly taken away.

"I am quite in earnest. Are you aware what it is you would buy of me?"

"Of course I am aware; the lease of this house."

"Not that alone. You would buy my hopes for the next twenty-seven years; for I declare to you there is not to my knowledge in all England a spot in which I so desire to pass my days as in this peaceful town; and there is not in all Gosport a house in which I believe I shall be so happy as in this. You see, you propose to purchase of me something more than a parchment lease."

"But the—the things you mention are of no value to me."

"I do not say they are. I am speaking from my point of view, as all men are bound to do. There is no reason why we should bandy words. I am not anxious to sell the lease; wait till it is in the market,"

"A most unhealthy situation," observed Mr. Whimpole.

"It concerns ourselves, and we are contented."

"I cannot imagine a more unpleasant, not to say obnoxious, view."

"The view of the churchyard? The spot has already acquired an inestimable value in my eyes. God rest the souls of those who lie in it! The contemplation of the peaceful ground will serve to remind me of the vanity of life, and will be a constant warning to me to be fair and straightforward in my dealings. The warning may be needed, for in the business I intend to carry on there are—I do not deny it—many dangerous temptations."

"Tush, tush!" exclaimed Mr. Whimpole petulantly. "Straightforward dealings, indeed! The vanity of life, indeed!"

Aaron Cohen smiled.

Only once before in his life had Mr. Whimpole felt so thoroughly uncomfortable as at the present moment, and that was when he was a little boy, and fell into a bed of nettles, from which he was unable to extricate himself until he was covered with stings. It was just the same now; he was smarting all over from contact with Aaron Cohen, who was like a porcupine with sharp-pointed quills. But he would not tamely submit to such treatment; he would show Aaron that he could sting in return—he knew well enough where to plant his poisoned arrow.

It is due to Mr. Whimpole to state that he was not aware that the manner in which he was conducting himself during this interview was not commendable.



Being a narrow-minded man, he could not take a wide and generous view of abstract matters, which, by a perversion of reasoning, he generally regarded from a personal standpoint; such men as he, in their jealous regard for their own feelings, are apt to overlook the feelings of others, and, indeed, to behave occasionally as if they did not possess any. This was Mr. Whimpole's predicament, and having met a ready-witted man, he was made to suffer for his misconduct. He sent forth his sting in this wise:

"You speak, Mr. Cohen, of being straightforward in your dealings, but for the matter of that we all know what we may expect from a——"

And having got thus far in his ungenerously prompted speech, he felt himself unable, in the presence of Rachel, and with her reproachful eyes raised to his face, to conclude the sentence. Aaron Cohen finished it for him.

"For the matter of that," he said gently, "you all know what you may expect from a Jew. That is what you were going to say. And with this thought in your mind you came to trade with me. Well, sir, it may be that we both have something to learn."

"Mr. Cohen," said Mr. Whimpole slightly abashed, "I am sorry if I have said anything to hurt your feelings."

"The offense, sir, is atoned for by the expression of your sorrow."

This was taking high ground, and Mr. Whimpole's choler was ready to rise again; but he mastered it, and said in a conciliatory tone:

"I will disguise nothing from you; I was born in *this house*."

"The circumstance will make it all the more valuable to us. My dear"—impressing it upon Rachel with pleasant emphasis—"Mr. Whimpole was born in this house. A fortunate omen. Good luck will come to us, as it has come to him. It is a low-rented house, and those who have been born in it must have been poor men's children. When they rise in the world, as Mr. Whimpole has done, it is better than a horseshoe over the door. In which room were you born, Mr. Whimpole?"

"In the room on the back of the first floor," replied Mr. Whimpole, making a wild guess.

"Our bedroom. There should be a record on the walls; there should, indeed, be a record, such as is placed outside those houses in London which have been inhabited by famous people. Failing that, it is in the power of every man, assuredly of every rich man, to make for himself a record that shall be imperishable—far better, my dear sir, than the mere fixing of a plate on a cold stone wall."

Mr. Whimpole gazed at Aaron Cohen to discover if there was any trace of mockery in his face, but Aaron was perfectly grave and serious.

"A man's humility," said Mr. Whimpole, raising his eyes to the ceiling, "his sense of humbleness, would prevent him from making this record for himself. It has to be left to others to do it when they have found him out."

"Aha, my dear sir!" said Aaron softly, "when they have found him out. True! true! but how few of us are! How few of us receive our just reward! How few of us, when we are in our graves, receive or deserve

the tribute, 'Here lies a perfect man'! But the record I speak of will never be lost by a rich man's humility, by his humbleness, for it can be written unostentatiously in the hearts of the poor by the aid of silver and gold."

"I understand you, Mr. Cohen," said Mr. Whimpole inwardly confounding Aaron's flow of ideas, "by means of charity."

"Yes, sir, by means of charity. There is an old legend that a man's actions in life are marked in the air above him, in the places in which they are performed. There, in invisible space, are inscribed the records of his good and bad deeds, of his virtues, of his crimes; and when he dies his soul visits those places, and views the immortal writing which is visible to all the angels in heaven, and which covers him with shame or glory. Gosport, doubtless, has many such records of your charity."

"I do my best," said Mr. Whimpole, very much confused and mystified, "I hope I do my best. I said I would disguise nothing from you; I will, therefore, be quite frank, with no intention of wounding you. I am a strictly religious man, Mr. Cohen, and it hurts me that one whose religious belief is opposed to my own should inhabit the house in which I was born. I will give you a hundred and twenty pounds for the lease; that will leave you a profit of twenty pounds. Come, now!"

"I will not accept less for it, sir, than the sum I named."

"Is that your last word?"

*"It is my last word."*

Mr. Whimpole rose with a face of scarlet, and clapped his hat on his head.

"You are a—a——"

"A Jew. Leave it at that. Can you call me anything worse?" asked Aaron with no show of anger.

"No, I cannot. You are a Jew."

"I regret," said Aaron calmly, "that I cannot retort by calling you a Christian. May our next meeting be more agreeable! Good-evening, Mr. Whimpole."

"You do not know the gentleman you have insulted," said Mr. Whimpole as he walked toward the door. "You do not know my position in this town. I am in the expectation of being made a justice of the peace. You will live to repent this."

"I think not," said Aaron, taking the candle to show his visitor out. "I trust you may."

"You may find your residence in Gosport, where I am universally respected, not as agreeable as you would wish it to be."

"We shall see, we shall see," said Aaron, still smiling. "I may also make myself respected here."

"There is a prejudice against your race——"

"Am I not aware of it? Is not every Jew aware of it? Is it not thrown in our teeth by the bigoted and narrow-minded upon every possible occasion? We will live it down, sir. We have already done much; we will yet do more. Your use of the word prejudice is appropriate, for, as I understand its meaning, it represents a judgment formed without proper knowledge. Yes, sir, it is not to be disputed that there exists a prejudice against our race."

"Which, without putting any false meaning upon it,

will make this ancient and respectable town"—here Mr. Whimpole found himself at a loss, and he was compelled to wind up with the vulgar figure of speech—"too hot to hold you."

"This ancient town," said Aaron with a deeper seriousness in his voice, "is known to modern men as Gosport."

"A clever discovery," sneered Mr. Whimpole. "Are you going to put another of your false constructions on it?"

"No, sir. I am about to tell you a plain and beautiful truth. When in olden times a name was given to this place it was not Gosport. It was God's Port; and what God's port is there throughout the civilized world in which Jew and Christian alike have not an equal right to live, despite prejudice, despite bigotry, and despite the unreasonable anger of large corn-chandlers and respected churchwardens? I wish you, sir, good-night."

And having by this time reached the street door, Aaron Cohen opened it for Mr. Whimpole, and bowed him politely out.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE COURSE OF THE SEASONS.

UPON Aaron's return to the little parlor he saw that Rachel was greatly disturbed.

"My life!" he said, and he folded her in his arms and tenderly embraced her. "Don't let such a little thing as this distress you; it will all come right in the end."

"But how you kept your temper," she said, "that is what surprised me."

"It gave me the advantage of him, Rachel. I was really amused." He pinched her cheeks to bring the color back to them. "Some men must be managed one way, some another. And now for our game of bezique. Mr. Whimpole's visit"—he laughed at the recollection—"will make me enjoy it all the more."

There was no resisting his light-heartedness, and he won a smile from her, despite her anxiety. Rachel was not clever enough to discover that it was only by the cunning of her husband that she won the rubber of bezique. He was a keen judge of human nature, and he knew that this small victory would help to soothe her.

The next day was Friday, and the three golden balls were put up, and the name of Aaron Cohen painted over the shop door. A great many people came to look, and departed to circulate the news. At one o'clock the painting was done, and then Aaron said to

his wife, "I shall be out till the evening. Have you found anyone to attend to the lights and the fire?" They were not rich enough to keep a regular servant, and Aaron never touched fire on the Sabbath.

"I have heard of a woman," said Rachel; "she is coming this afternoon to see me."

"Good," said Aaron, and, kissing Rachel, went away with a light heart.

In the afternoon the woman, Mrs. Hawkins, called, and Rachel explained the nature of the services she required. Mrs. Hawkins was to come to the house every Friday night to put coals on the fire and extinguish the lights, and four times on Saturday to perform the same duties. Rachel proposed eightpence a week, but Mrs. Hawkins stuck out for tenpence, and this being acceded to, she departed—leaving a strong flavor of gin behind her. When Aaron came home the two Sabbath candles were alight upon the snow-white tablecloth, and on the tablecloth a supper was spread—fried fish, white bread and white butter, and in the fender a steaming coffeepot. He washed and said his prayers, and then they sat down to their meal in a state of perfect contentment. Aaron, having besought the customary blessing on the bread they were about to eat, praised the fish, praised the butter, praised the coffee, praised his wife, and after a full meal praised the Lord in a Song of Degrees for blessings received: "When the Eternal restored the captivity of Zion we were as those who dream. Our mouths were then filled with laughter, and our tongues with song." He had a rich *baritone voice*, and Rachel listened in pious delight to *his intoning of the prayer.*

The supper things were cleared away, the white tablecloth being allowed to remain because of the lighted candles on it, which it would have been breaking the Sabbath to lift, and then there came a knock at the street door.

"That is the woman I engaged," said Rachel, hurrying into the passage. There entered, not Mrs. Hawkins, but a very small girl, carrying a very large baby. The baby might have been eighteen months old and the girl ten years, and of the twain the baby was the plumper.

Without "with your leave," or "by your leave," the small girl pushed past Rachel before the astonished woman could stop her, and presented herself before the no less astonished Aaron Cohen. Her comprehensive glance took in the lighted candles, the cheerful fire, and the master of the house in one comprehensive flash. With some persons what is known as making up one's mind is a slow and complicated process; with the small girl it was electrical. She deposited the large baby in Aaron's lap, admonishing the infant to "keep quiet, or she'd ketch it," blew out the candles in two swift puffs, and kneeling before the grate, proceeded to rake out the fire. So rapid were her movements that the fender was half filled with cinders and blazing coals before Rachel had time to reach the room.

"In Heaven's name," cried Aaron, "what is the meaning of this?"

"It's all right, sir," said the small girl; "I've come for aunty."

"Put down the poker instantly," exclaimed Aaron; "your aunty, whoever she may be, is not here."



"Tell me somethink I don't know," requested the small girl. "This is Mr. Cohen's, the Jew, aint it?"

"It is," replied Aaron, with despairing gestures, for the baby was dabbing his face with hands sticky with crumbs of sugar stuff.

"Well, wot are yer 'ollerin for? I'm only doing wot aunty told me."

"And who *is* your aunty?"

"Mrs. 'Orkins. Pretend not to know 'er—do! She sed you'd try to do 'er out of 'er money, and want 'er to take fippence instid of tenpence."

"Did she? You have come here by her orders, I suppose?"

"Yes, I 'ave—to poke out the fire and blow out the candles—and I've done it."

"You have," said Aaron ruefully. "And now, little girl, you will do as I tell you. Put down that poker. Get up. Feel on the mantelshelf for a box of matches. I beg your pardon; you are too short to reach. Here is the box. Take out a match. Strike it. Light the candles. Thank you! Last, but not least, relieve me of this baby with the sticky hands."

The small girl snatched the baby from his arms, and stood before him in an attitude of defiance. For the first time he had a clear view of her.

"Heaven save us!" he cried, falling back in his chair.

Her appearance was a sufficient explanation of his astonishment. To say that she was ragged and dirty and forlorn, and as utterly unlike a little girl living in civilized society as any little girl could possibly be, would be but a poor description of her. Her face suggested that she had been lying with her head in a coal

scuttle; she wore no hat or bonnet; her hair was matted; her frock reached just below her knees, and might have been picked out of a dust heap; she had no stockings; on her feet were two odd boots several sizes too large for her and quite worn out, one tied to her ankle with a piece of gray list, the other similarly secured with a piece of knotted twine. Her eyes glittered with preternatural sharpness; her cheek bones stuck out; her elbows were pointed and red; she was all bone—literally all bone; there was not an ounce of flesh upon her—not any part of her body that could be pinched with a sense of satisfaction. But the baby! What a contrast! Her head was round and chubby, and was covered with a mass of light curls; her hands were full of dimples; her face was puffed out with superabundant flesh; the calves of her legs were a picture. In respect of clothes she was no better off than Mrs. Hawkins' niece.

"Wot are yer staring at?" demanded the girl.

"At you, my child," replied Aaron with compassion in his voice.

"Let's know when yer done," retorted the girl, "and I'll tell yer wot I charge for it."

"And at baby," added Aaron.

"That'll be hextra. Don't say I didn't warn yer."

There were conflicting elements in the situation: its humor was undeniable, but it had its pathetic side. Aaron Cohen was swayed now by one emotion, now by another.

"So you are Mfs. Hawkins' niece?" he said, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Yes, I am. Wot 'ave yer got to say agin it?"

"Nothing. Is baby also Mrs. Hawkins' niece, or nephew?"

"If you've no objections," said the girl with excessive politeness, "she's Mrs. Pond's little gal, and I nusses 'er."

"I have no objection. What is your name?"

"Wot it may be, my lordship," replied the girl, her politeness becoming Arctic, "is one thing—wot it is is another."

"You are a clever little girl," said Aaron, smiling and rubbing his hands—"a sharp, clever little girl."

"Thank yer for nothink," said the girl.

She had reached the North Pole; it was necessary to thaw her.

"Upon the mantelshelf," said Aaron, "just behind that beautiful blue vase, are two penny pieces. Step on a chair—not that cane one, you'll go through it; the wooden one—and see if you can find them."

"I see 'em," said the girl, looking down upon Aaron in more senses than one.

"They are yours. Put them in your pocket."

The girl clutched the pennies, jumped from the chair—whereat the baby crowed, supposing it to be a game provided for her amusement—and having no pocket, held the money tight in her hand. Visions of sweet stuff rose before her. The pennies getting warm, the ice at the North Pole began to melt.

"And now perhaps you will tell me your name."

"Prissy. That's the short un."

"The long one is——"

"Priscilla."

"A *grand* name. You ought to have a silk gown

and satin shoes and a gold comb." Prissy opened her eyes very wide. The ice was melting quickly, and the buds were coming on the trees. "And baby's name?"

"Wictoria Rejiner. That's grander, aint it?"

"Much grander! Victoria Regina—a little queen!"

Prissy gave baby a kiss, with pride and love in her glittering eyes. "What makes your face so black, Prissy?"

"Coals. Aunty deals in 'em—and cabbages and taters and oranges and lemons. And she takes in washing."

So genial was Aaron Cohen's voice that spring was coming in fast. "You look, Prissy, as if you had very little to eat."

"I don't 'ave much," said Prissy, with a longing sigh. "I could eat all day and night if I 'ad the chance."

"My dear," said Aaron to his wife, "there is some coffee left in the pot. Do you like coffee, Prissy?"

"Do I like corfey? Don't I like corfey! Oh, no—not me! Jest you try me!"

"I will. Give me Victoria Regina. Poke the fire. That's right; you are the quickest, sharpest little girl in my acquaintance. Pour some water from the kettle into the coffeepot. Set it on the fire. Rachel, my dear, take Prissy and baby into the kitchen and let them wash themselves, and afterward they shall have some supper."

The buds were breaking into blossom; it really was a lovely spring.

In a few minutes Rachel and the children re-entered the room from the kitchen, baby with a clean face, and

Prissy with a painfully red and shining skin. Following her husband's instructions, Rachel cut half a dozen slices of bread, upon which she spread the butter with a liberal hand. Prissy, hugging Victoria Regina, watched the proceedings in silence. By this time the coffee was bubbling in the pot.

"Take it off the fire, Prissy," said Aaron Cohen; and in another minute the little girl, with baby in her lap, was sitting at the table with a cup of hot smoking coffee, well sugared and milked, which she was so eager to drink that she scalded her throat. The bread and butter was perhaps the sweetest that Prissy had ever ate, and the coffee was nectar. The baby ate more than Prissy; indeed, she ate so much and so quickly that she occasionally choked, and had to be violently shaken and patted on the back; but she became tired out at last, and before Prissy had finished her bounteous meal she was fast asleep in her nurse's arms.

Aaron Cohen leaned back in his chair, and gazed with benevolent eyes upon the picture before him; and as he gazed the sweetest of smiles came to his lips and did not leave them. Rachel, stealing to the back of his chair, put her arms round his neck, and nestled her face to his.

It was a most beautiful summer, and all the trees were in flower.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AARON COHEN PREACHES A SERMON ON LARGE NOSES.

THE fire was burning brightly, and the old cat which they had brought with them to Gosport was stretched at full length upon the hearth rug. The children were gone, and Prissy had received instructions to come again at ten o'clock to extinguish the candles. It may be said of Prissy, in respect of her first visit to the house, that she came in like a lion and went out like a lamb.

It was a habit on Sabbath eve for Aaron to read to his wife something from the general literature of the times, or from the newspapers, and to accompany his reading with shrewd or sympathetic remarks, to which Rachel always listened in delight. Occasionally he read from a book of Hebrew prayers, and commented upon them, throwing a light upon poem and allegory which made their meaning clear to Rachel's understanding. Invariably, also, he blessed her, as Jewish fathers who have not wandered from the paths of orthodoxy bless their children on the Sabbath. Now, as she stood before him, he placed his hand upon her head and said:

"God make thee like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah! May the Eternal bless and preserve thee!

May the Eternal cause his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee! May the Eternal lift up his countenance toward thee, and grant thee peace!"

It was something more than a blessing; it was a prayer of heartfelt love. Rachel raised her face to his, and they tenderly kissed each other. Then he took his seat on one side of the fire, and she on the other. A prayer book and one of Charles Dickens' stories were on the table, but he did not open them; he had matter for thought, and he was in the mood for conversation. He was in a light humor, which exhibited itself in a quiet laugh, which presently deepened in volume.

"I am thinking of the little girl," he explained to Rachel. "It was amazing the way she puffed out the candles and poked out the fire—quick as lightning. It was the most comical thing! And her black face—and Victoria Regina's sticky fingers! Ha, ha, ha!"

His merriment was contagious, and it drew forth Rachel's; the room was filled with pleasant sound.

"I saw Mr. Whimpole to-day," said Aaron, "and I made him a bow, which he did not return. My Jewish nose offends him. How unfortunate! Yes, my life, no one can dispute that the Jew has a big nose. It proclaims itself; it is a mark and a sign. He himself often despises it—he himself often looks at it in the glass with aversion, 'Why, why have I been compelled to endure this affliction?' he murmurs, and he reflects with envy upon the elegant nose of the Christian. Short-sighted mortal, not to understand that he owes everything to his big nose! A great writer—a learned man who passed the whole of his life in the study of

these matters—proclaims the nose to be the foundation or abutment of the brain. What follows? That the larger the nose of a man is the better off for it is the man. Listen, my dear.” He took a book from a little nest of bookshelves, and turned over the pages. “‘Whoever,’ says this learned writer, ‘is acquainted with the Gothic arch will perfectly understand what I mean by this abutment; for upon this the whole power of the arch of the forehead rests, and without it the mouth and cheeks would be oppressed by miserable ruins.’ He lays down exact laws which govern the beautiful (and therefore large) nose. Its length should equal the length of the forehead, the back should be broad, its outline remarkably definite, the sides well defined, and near the eye it must be at least half an inch in breadth. Such a nose, this great authority declares, is of more worth than a kingdom. It imparts solidity and unity to the whole countenance; it is the mountain—bear in mind, my dear, the mountain—that shelters the fair vales beneath. How proud, then, should I be of my nose, which in some respects answers to this description! Not in all—no, not in all—I am not so vain as to believe that my nose is worth more than a kingdom; but when I am told that a large nose is a sign of sensibility, and of good nature and good humor, I cannot help a glow of *conceited* satisfaction stealing over me. How many great men have you known with small noses? There are, of course, exceptions, but I speak of the general rule. Our coreligionist, Benjamin Disraeli—look at his nose; look at the noses of all our great Jewish musicians and composers—it is because they are of a proper size that



they have become famous. Some time since in London I had the opportunity of looking over a wonderful Bible—six enormous volumes published by Mr. Thomas Macklin nearly a century ago—embellished with grand pictures by the most eminent English artists, and there I saw the figures of Abraham and Jacob and Aaron and Moses, and other ancestors of ours. There is not a small nose on one of the faces of these great patriarchs and prophets; the great painters who drew them had learned from their studies how to delineate the biblical heroes. A big nose is a grand decoration, and I would sooner possess it than a bit of red ribbon in my buttonhole, or a star on my breast. Indeed, my life, I have it—the nose of my forefathers.”

Aaron made this declaration in a tone of comic despair. “And having it I will not part with it, except with life.”

There was so much playful humor in the dissertation that Rachel laughed outright. Her laugh was the sweetest in the world, and it fell like music on Aaron’s heart. He smiled, and there was a gleam in his eyes, and presently he spoke again.

“I am not aware whether you have ever observed the attraction a big nose has for children. Take the most popular drama of all ages, Punch and Judy. Where is the artist who would venture to present Punch with any but an enormous nose? Are the children frightened at it? No, they revel in it. Do they sympathize with Judy when she is slain? Not at all; every whack Punch gives her is greeted with shrieks of laughter—because of his enormous nose. Introduce two strangers to a baby, one with a very small nose,

the other with a very big nose. Let them both hold out their arms. Instinctively the baby flies to the man with the large nose. It is Nature's silent voice that instructs the child. He or she—the sex is not material—instinctively knows which is the better nose of the two, which is the most promising nose, the most suggestive of kisses and jumps in the air and cakes and songs, and all that is dear to a child's heart. The test is infallible. Nothing will convince me that you did not marry me because of my big nose."

"Indeed, dear," said Rachel, still laughing, "I hardly think I would have married you without it."

"Then the fact is established. I am about to make a confession to you, Rachel; I am going to tell you the true reasons for my choosing this place to reside in, where I am separated by a long distance from the friends of my youth and manhood, and where you, too, my dear child"—in his moments of tenderness he occasionally addressed her thus—"will, I fear, be for a time without friends to whom you can unbosom yourself."

"I have you, my dear husband," said Rachel in a tone of deep affection, drawing closer to him, and slipping her little hand into his great hand. A fine, large, nervous hand was Aaron Cohen's; a palmist would have seen great possibilities in it. Rachel's hand, despite her domestic work, was the hand of a lady; she took a proper pride in preserving its delicacy and beauty. "I have you, my dear husband," she said.

"Yes, my life, but you used to kiss at least a dozen female friends a day."

"I kissed Prissy and the baby to-night."

"When their faces were washed, I hope. Listen to my confession. Pride and hard-heartedness drove me from the neighborhood in which we were married. A thousand pounds did my dear father—God rest his soul—bequeath to me. It dwindled and dwindled—my own fault. I could not say no. One came to me with a melancholy tale which led to a little loan; another came and another and another—I did not make you acquainted with the extent of my transgressions. My dear, I encouraged the needy ones; I even went out of my way to lend, thinking myself a fine fellow, and flapping my wings in praise of my stupidity. Not half I lent came back to me. Then business began to fall off, and I saw that I was in the wrong groove; I had grown into bad ways, and had I remained much longer in the old neighborhood I should have been left without a penny. I thought of our future, of the injustice I was inflicting upon you. 'I will go,' said I, 'where I am not known, while I still have a little to earn a living with, among strangers who, when they borrow, will give me value in return, and where I shall not have to say to poor friends, "Come to me no more; I am poorer than yourselves." I have been foolish and weak; I will be wise and strong. I will grow rich and hard-hearted.' Yes, my dear, that is what I intend, to grow rich, and my heart will not be oppressed by the sight of suffering it is out of my power to relieve. Rachel, I am not so clever as I pretend to be; to speak the truth, I am afraid I am rather given to crowing; and when it is not alone my own welfare, but the welfare of one so dear to me as you are, that is concerned, I tremble, I begin to doubt

whether I have done right. Give me your opinion of the step I have taken."

She gazed at him with serious, loving, trustful eyes.

"It is a wise step, Aaron; I am sure it is. Whatever you do is right, and I am satisfied."

Ten o'clock struck, and a knock at the door announced the faithful Prissy, come to put the fire out. She entered with the baby in her arms, sound asleep. She was flushed and excited, and she held her hand over the right side of her face.

"Victoria ought to be abed," said Rachel, taking a peep at baby.

"She can't go," retorted Prissy, "afore 'er mother's ready to take 'er."

"Where is her mother?" asked Aaron.

"At the Jolly Sailor Boy, enj'ying of 'erself."

"Ah. And where is your aunt?"

"At the Jolly Sailor Boy, too, 'aving a 'arf-quartern. There's been a reg'lar row there about Mrs. Macrory's flannin peddicut."

"What happened to it?"

"It went wrong. Yes, it did. Yer needn't larf. Call me a story, do! I would if I was you!"

"No, no, Prissy," said Aaron in a soothing tone.

"How did the flannel petticoat go wrong?"

"Nobody knowed at fust. Aunty does Mrs. Macrory's washing, and a lot more besides, and the things gits mixed sometimes. Aunty can't 'elp that—'ow can she? So Mrs. Macrory's things was took 'ome without the peddicut. Mrs. Macrory she meets aunty at the Jolly Sailor Boy, and begins to kick up about it. 'Where's my peddicut?' she ses. 'Ow should I know?"

ses aunty. Then, wot d'yer think? Mrs. Macrory sees somethink sticking out of aunty's dress be'ind, and she pulls at it. 'Why,' she ses, 'you've got it on!' That's wot the row was about. Aunty didn't know 'ow it come on 'er—she's ready to take 'er oath on that. Aint it rum?"

"Very rum. Put out the fire, Prissy. It is time for all good people to get to bed."

In the performance of this duty Prissy was compelled to remove her hand from her face, and when she rose from the floor it was seen that her right eye was sadly discolored, and that she was in pain.

"O Prissy, poor child!" exclaimed Rachel; "you have been hurt!"

"Yes, mum," said Prissy. "Mrs. Macrory's gal—she's twice as big as me; you should see 'er legs! she ses, 'You're in that job,' she ses, meaning the peddicut; and she lets fly and gives me a one-er on account."

Rachel ran upstairs, and brought down a bottle of gillard water, with which she bathed the bruise, and tied one of her clean white handkerchiefs over it. Prissy stood quite still, her lips quivering; it may have been the gillard water that filled the girl's unbandaged eye with tears.

"That will make you feel easier," said Rachel. "Blow out the candles now, and be here at half-past eight in the morning."

"I'll be sure to be," said Prissy with a shake in her voice.

In the dark Aaron Cohen heard the sound of a kiss.

"Good-night, sir," said the girl.

"Good-night, Prissy," said Aaron.

The chain of the street door was put up, and the shutters securely fastened, and then Aaron and Rachel, hand in hand, went up the dark stairs to their room.

"My dear," said Aaron drowsily a few minutes after he and his wife were in bed, "are you asleep?"

"No, Aaron," murmured Rachel, who was on the borderland of dreams.

"I've been thinking"—he dozed off for a moment or two—"I've been thinking——"

"Yes, my'dear?"

"That I wouldn't give Prissy's aunt any flannel petticoats to wash."

Almost before the words had passed his lips sleep claimed him for its own.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A PROCLAMATION OF WAR.

ON Monday morning Aaron commenced business. In the shop window was a display of miscellaneous articles ticketed at low prices, and Aaron took his place behind his counter, ready to dispose of them, ready to argue and bargain, and to advance money on any other articles on which a temporary loan was required. He did not expect a rush of customers, being aware that pawnbroking was a tree of very small beginnings, a seed which needed time before it put forth flourishing branches. The security was sure, the profits accumulative. He was confident of the result. Human necessity, even human frailty, was on his side; all he had to do was to be fair in his dealings.

In the course of the day he had a good many callers; some to make inquiries, some to offer different things in pledge. Of these latter the majority were children, with whom he declined to negotiate.

"Who sent you?"

"Mother."

"Go home and tell her she must come herself."

He would only do business with grown-up people. Setting before himself a straight and honest rule of life, he was not the man to wander from it for the sake of *a little profit*.

Of the other description of callers a fair proportion entered the shop out of idle curiosity. He had pleasant words for all, and gave change for sixpences and shillings with as much courtesy as if each transaction was a gain to him—as, indeed, it was, for no man or woman who entered with an unfavorable opinion of him (influenced by certain rumors to his discredit which had been circulated by Mr. Whimpole) departed without having their minds disabused by his urbanity and genial manners. “I don’t see any harm in him,” was the general verdict from personal evidence; “he’s as nice a spoken man as I ever set eyes on.”

On the evening of this first day he expressed his satisfaction at the business he had done.

“Our venture will turn out well,” he said to Rachel. “The flag of fortune is waving over us.”

It was eight o’clock, and although he scarcely expected further custom, he kept the gas burning in the shop window.

“Light is an attraction,” he observed; “it is better than an advertisement in the papers.”

The evening was fine; he and Rachel were sitting in the parlor, with the intermediate door open. Aaron was smoking a handsome silver-mounted pipe and making up his accounts, while his wife was busy with her needle. Satan could never have put anything in the shape of mischief in the way of these two pairs of industrious hands, for they were never idle, except during the Sabbath and the fasts and the holidays, and then it was not idleness, but rest divinely ordained. The silver-mounted pipe was one of Aaron’s most precious possessions, it being his beloved wife’s gift to



him on his last birthday; he would not have sold it for ten times its weight in gold. At peace with the world and with themselves, they conversed happily as they worked; but malignant influences were at work of which they were soon to feel the shock.

Aaron had put his account books in the safe, and was turning the key, when the sound of loud voices outside his shop reached their ears. The voices were those of children, male and female, who were exercising their lungs in bass, treble, and falsetto. Only one word did they utter:

"Jew! Jew! Jew!"

Rachel started up in alarm, her hand at her heart. Her face was white, her limbs were trembling.

"Jew! Jew! Jew!"

Aaron put the key of the safe in his pocket, and laid down his pipe. His countenance was not troubled, but his brows were puckered.

"Jew! Jew! Jew!"

"It is wicked—it is wicked!" cried Rachel, wringing her hands. "Oh, how can they be so cruel!"

Aaron's countenance instantly cleared; he had to think, to act, for her as well as himself. With fond endearments he endeavored to soothe her, but her agitation was profound, and while these cries of implied opprobrium continued she could not school herself to calmness. Not for herself did she fear; it was against her dear, her honored husband that this wicked demonstration was made, and she dreaded that he would be subjected to violence. To her perturbed mind the voices seemed to proceed from men and *women*; to Aaron's clearer senses they were the voices

of children, and he divined the source of the insult. Rachel sobbed upon his breast, and clasped him close to protect him.

"Rachel, my love, my life!" he said in a tone of tender firmness, "be calm, I entreat you. There is nothing to fear. Have you lost confidence in your husband? Would you increase my troubles, and make the task before me more difficult than it is? On my word as a man, on my faith as a Jew, I will make friends of these foolish children, in whose outcries there is no deep-seated venom—I declare it, none. They do not know what they are doing. I will make them respect me; I will enrich them with a memory which, when they are men and women, will make them think of the past with shame. I will make my enemies respect me. If you will help me by your silence and patience I will turn their bitterness into thistledown, which I can blow away with a breath. Take heart, my beloved, dear life of my life! Trust to me, and in the course of a few days you shall see a wonder. There—let me kiss your tears away. That is my own Rachel, whose little finger is more precious to me than all the world beside. Good, good, my own dear wife! Do you think it is a tragedy that is being enacted by those youngsters? No, no, it is a comedy. You shall see, you shall see!"

She was comforted by his words; she drew strength from his strength; she looked at him in wonder as he began to laugh even while he was caressing her, and her wonder increased when she saw that his eyes fairly shone with humor.

"Have no fear, my heart," he said, "have not the

slightest fear. I am going to meet them—not with javelin and spear; with something still more powerful, and with good temper for my shield.”

“Aaron,” she whispered, “are you sure there is no danger?”

“If I were not sure,” he answered merrily, “I would remain snug in this room. I am not a man of war; I am a man of peace, and with peaceful weapons will I scatter the enemy. For your dear sake I would not expose myself to peril, for do I not know that if I were hurt your pain would be greater than mine? It is my joy to know it. You will remain quietly here?”

“I will, dear husband; but you will not go into the street?”

“I shall go no farther than the street door; I shall not need to go farther.”

He stopped to fill his pipe and light it, and then, with tender kisses, and a smile on his lips, he left her.

When he made his appearance at the shop door there was a sudden hush, and a sudden scuttling away of the twenty or thirty children who had congregated to revile him. He remained stationary at the door, smoking his pipe and gazing benignantlly at them.

Their fears of chastisement dispelled by his peaceful attitude, they stopped, looked over their shoulders, and slowly and warily came back, keeping, however, at a safe distance from him. They found their voices again.

“Jew! Jew! Jew!”

“Good children! good children!” said Aaron in a clear, mellifluous voice. Then he put his pipe to his *mouth again*, and continued to smoke.

"Jew! Jew! Jew!"

"Good little boys and girls," said Aaron. "Bravo! bravo! You deserve a reward. Every laborer is worthy of his hire."

He drew from his pocket three or four pennies, which, with smiling nods of his head, he threw among them.

Instantly came into play other passions—greed, avarice, the determination not to be defrauded of their due. Falling upon the money, they scrambled and fought for it. Aaron threw among them two or three more pennies, and their ardor increased. They scratched, they kicked, they tumbled over each other, blows were exchanged. Those who had secured pennies scampered away with them, and with loud and vengeful cries the penniless scampered after them. The next moment they had all disappeared.

Shaking with internal laughter, Aaron remained on his steps a while, puffing at his pipe; then he put up the shutters, locked the street door, and rejoined his wife.

"My dear," he said, and his voice was so gay that her heart beat with joy, "that is the end of the first act. They will not come back to-night."

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE BATTLE IS FOUGHT AND WON.

"THE personal affections by which we are governed," said Aaron Cohen, seating himself comfortably in his chair, "are, like all orders of beings to which they come, of various degrees and qualities, and the smaller become merged and lost in the larger, as the serpents of Pharaoh's magicians were swallowed up by Aaron's rod. Wisdom is better than an inheritance, and anger resteth in the bosom of fools. Moreover, as is observed by Rabbi Chanina, 'wise men promote peace in the world.' Such, my dear Rachel, is my aim, and so long as the means within my reach are harmless, so long will I follow the learned rabbi's precept. If the human heart were not full of envy and deceit what I have done should bring joy to our persecutors, but I will not pledge myself that it has done so in this instance. On the contrary, on the contrary." Aaron paused here to laugh. "The opprobrious cries ceased suddenly, did they not, Rachel?"

"They did, and I was very much surprised."

"You will be more surprised when you hear that I rewarded with modern shekels the labors of the young rascals who would make our lives a torment to us."

"You gave them money!" exclaimed Rachel in *amazement*.

"I threw among them seven penny pieces. Why not?"

"But why?"

"Ah, why, why? Had I thrown among them seven cannon balls they would scarcely have been more effective. The truth of this will be made manifest to our benefit before many days are gone, or Cohen is not my name. Wife of my soul, I went forth, not with a lion's but with a fox's skin. Have I not studied the law? Are not the Cohanim priests, and are not priests supposed to be men of intelligence and resource? We read in Proverbs, 'Counsel is mine and sound wisdom; I have understanding, I have strength.' Rabbi Meyer says that the study of the law endows a man with sovereignty, dominion, and ratiocination. He is slow to anger, ready to forgive an injury, has a good heart, receives chastisement with resignation, loves virtue, correction, and admonition. This, perhaps, is going a little too far, and is endowing a human being with qualities too transcendent, but it is true to a certain extent, and I have instinctively profited by it. Ill fitted should I be to engage in the battle of life if I were not able to cope with the young rascals who made the night hideous outside our door, and who, if I am not mistaken, will repeat their performance to-morrow evening at the same hour."

"They will come again," cried Rachel, clasping her hands in despair.

"They will come again, and again, and yet again, and then—well, then we shall see what we shall see."

"You gave them money to-night," said Rachel sadly, "and they will return for more,"

"And they will return for more," said Aaron with complacency. "At the present moment I should judge that they are engaged in a fierce contest. When that look comes into your face, my dear, it is an indication that I have said something you do not exactly understand. I threw to them seven apples of discord, which the nimblest and the strongest seized and fled with. But each soldier conceived he had a right to at least one of the apples, and those who were left empty-handed labored under a sense of wrong. They had been robbed by their comrades. After them they rushed to obtain their portion of the spoils of war. Then ensued a grand scrimmage in which noses are injured and eyes discolored. I am not there, but I see the scene clearly with my mind's eye." He took a sovereign from his pocket and regarded it contemplatively. "Ah, root of much evil and of much good, what have you not to answer for? Rachel, my love, take heart of courage, and when you hear those boys shouting outside to-morrow night do not be alarmed. Trust in me; everything will come right in the end."

The scene which Aaron had drawn from his imagination was as near as possible to the truth. There had been a battle royal between the boys and girls for possession of the pennies; noses were put out of joint, eyes were discolored, words of injurious import exchanged, and bad blood engendered. The sevenpence for which they fought would not have paid for the repairs to the clothes which were torn and rent during the fray. The end of it was that the robbers, *after being kicked and cuffed ignominiously*, were not

allowed to join in a compact made by the penniless, to the effect that they would assemble outside Aaron Cohen's shop to-morrow night and repeat the tactics which had been so well rewarded, and that all moneys received should be equally divided between the warriors engaged. One, Ted Kite, was appointed commander, to organize the expedition, and to see fair play.

Accordingly, on Tuesday night, a score or so of boys and girls presented themselves in front of the shop and commenced shouting, "Jew! Jew! Jew!" the fugleman being Ted Kite, who proved himself well fitted for the task.

"There he is, there he is," said the youngsters eagerly as Aaron made his appearance on the doorstep, and, inspired by their captain, they continued to fire.

"Good children, good children," said Aaron, nodding benignantly in approval, and continuing to smoke his silver-mounted pipe. "Very well done, very well done indeed!"

"Aint he going to throw us anything?" they asked each other anxiously, their greedy eyes watching Aaron's movements.

They were kept rather long in suspense, but at length Aaron's hand sought his pocket, and half a dozen pennies rattled on the stones. Down they pounced, and fought and scratched for them as on the previous night, the fortunate ones scudding away as on the first occasion, followed by their hungry comrades. They were caught, and compelled to disgorge; the pennies were changed into farthings, and each soldier received one



for his pay; the two or three that were left were spent in sweet stuff.

"What a game!" the children exclaimed, and appointed to meet on the following night to continue the pastime.

On this third night they were kept waiting still longer. Aaron Cohen did not make his appearance so quickly, and several minutes elapsed before the pennies were thrown to them. On the first night he had disbursed seven, on the second night six, on this third only four. There was the usual fighting for them, and the usual scampering away; and when the sum total was placed in the hands of Ted Kite a great deal of dissatisfaction was expressed. Only fourpence! They doubted the correctness of the sum; they were sure that more had been thrown; one girl said she counted eight, and others supported her statement. Who had stolen the missing pennies? They quarreled and fought again; they regarded each other with suspicion; doubts were thrown upon the honesty of the captain. Off went his coat instantly; off went the coats of other boys; the girls, having no coats to throw off, tucked up their sleeves; and presently six or seven couples were hitting, scratching, and kicking each other. Much personal damage was done, and more bad blood engendered. The warfare was not by any means of a heroic nature.

Nevertheless they assembled on the fourth night, and were kept waiting still longer before they were paid. Aaron did not show his liberality, however, until he had had a conference with the captain. His keen eyes had singled out Ted Kite, and he beckoned

to him. Ted hesitated; he was only a small boy; Aaron Cohen was a big man, and in a personal contest could have disposed of him comfortably.

"Yah, you coward!" cried the rank and file to their captain. "What are you frightened at? What did we make you captain for?"

Thus taunted, Ted Kite ventured to approach the smiling foe.

"Come a little nearer," said Aaron; "I am not going to hurt you. I wish you to do me a favor."

Ted, with a sidelong look over his shoulder at his army, as if appealing to it to rush to his rescue in case he was seized, shuffled forward. Aaron Cohen held out his hand; Ted Kite timidly responded, and was surprised at the friendly grip he received.

"You are the leader," said Aaron in his most genial voice.

"Yes, Mr. Cohen," replied Ted, growing bold; "I'm the captain.

"Clever lad, clever captain! Here's a penny for you. Don't let them see you take it. It is for you alone. They will do as you tell them, of course."

"I'll let 'em know it if they don't."

"It's right you should. I think it is very kind of you to come here as you do, but I want you to oblige me and not come to-morrow night. It is Friday, and the shop will be closed, so you would be wasting your time. That would be foolish."

"Yes, it would," said Ted, somewhat bewildered.

"Shall we come on Saturday night?"

"Certainly, if you think proper. Then you will not be here to-morrow?"

"We won't, as you'd rather not, Mr. Cohen."

"Thank you; I am really obliged to you. Now go and join your army."

Ted Kite turned away, walked a step or two, and returned.

"But I say, Mr. Cohen——"

"Well, my lad?"

"Do you like it?"

"Do I like it?" echoed Aaron, with a sly chuckle. "Should I speak to you as I am doing if I didn't? It is as good as a play. I think it is very nice of you—very nice, very nice indeed!"

"Oh," said Ted in a crestfallen tone. As Aaron took pleasure in the persecution it was not half such good fun as it had been. "He says he likes it," he said to his comrades when he was among them. "He says it's as good as a play."

"How much did he give you?" they inquired, feeling as he did in respect of the fun of their proceedings.

"He didn't give me nothing."

"We saw him hold out his hand to you," they protested.

"You saw us shake hands, that's what you saw. Let's get on with the game; we don't want to be kept waiting here all night."

They went on with the game, calling "Jew! Jew! Jew!" half-heartedly. Putting the pecuniary reward out of the question, it was a game that was becoming rather monotonous. They had to call for quite a quarter of an hour before Aaron paid them; and this time he paid them with two pennies only. The children fell on the ground, and scraped the stones for

more, but found none, and they retired grumbling, discontented, and suspicious of each other's honesty.

On Friday night, the Sabbath eve, Aaron and Rachel had peace; and on Saturday night the children made their appearance again and gave forth their chorus. Aaron came to the door and stood there smoking his pipe and smiling at them. But he did not throw any money to them. They did not know what to make of it. Their voices grew weaker and weaker, they wandered about discontentedly, they declared it was not fair on Mr. Cohen's part. "We'll try him again on Monday night," they said.

They tried him again on Monday night, and he stood on his steps, commending them, but he gave them no more money. There was no heart whatever now in their invectives. They were not philosophers, and did not know that the course Aaron had pursued had taken the sting out of their tails. "He likes it," they said to each other as they strolled off moodily, "and he wants us to come here and scream our throats dry without being paid for it. Well, we aint going to do it. We won't call him Jew any more if he wants us ever so much. It aint likely, now, is it? What does he mean by treating us so shabby?" These young rascallions thought the world was out of joint.

In this way it was that Aaron Cohen fought the battle and gained a bloodless victory. He laughed in his sleeve as he thought of it, and laughed aloud in his cozy little parlor when he related the whole affair to Rachel.

"One shilling and eightpence has it cost me, my

love," he said, "and I do not begrudge the money. Show me the battle that has been won for less."

Rachel was greatly relieved, but her dominant feeling was admiration for her husband's wisdom.

"I do not believe any other man in the world would have thought of it," she said; and though Aaron shook his head in modest deprecation, he was justified in inwardly congratulating himself upon his astute tactics.

The story got about, and the townspeople were much amused by it. "Mr. Cohen's a clever fellow," they said. He grew to be respected by them, and as the weeks passed by and it was seen that he was not only a fair-dealing but a kindly-hearted man the innuendos which Mr. Whimpole continued to circulate about him produced a very small effect. Mr. Whimpole was not pleased; where is the man who would have been in his position? Talking one night with Rachel over the animosity the cornchandler bore toward the Jews, Aaron said:

"I have no doubt, my dear, that he is quite conscientious, and that he considers his prejudices to be the outcome of a just conviction. Doubtless his parents had the same conviction, and he imbibed it from them. There are thousands of people who agree with him, and there are worse persecutions than that to which we have been subjected. Look at that infamously governed country Russia, which in the maps ought to be stamped blood red, with a heavy mourning border around it. The wretches who inflict incredible sufferings upon countless innocent beings call themselves Christians. They are not Christians, they are *fiends*, and judgment will fall upon them. Spain, once

the greatest of nations, fell into decay when the Jew deserted it. So will it be with other nations that oppress the Jew. Let Germany look to it. It is easy to arouse the evil passions of uneducated human beings, but a brand of fire shall fall upon the heads of those who are employed in work so vile."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### JOY AND SORROW.

PERHAPS, however, to Rachel may chiefly be ascribed the general respect the Cohens earned among the townsfolk. Charitable, kind, and gentle by nature, she was instinctively drawn to those poor people who had fallen into misfortune. Upon her sympathetic ears no tale of distress could fall without bearing fruit. She won friends everywhere, and her sweet face was like a ray of sunshine in the homes of the poor. It was not at all uncommon to hear that her timely assistance had been the means of restoring to health those who had been stricken down. She walked through life as an angel of mercy might have done, and flowers grew about her feet.

Of all the friends who sounded her praises none were more enthusiastic than little Prissy, who came now regularly to the house to do domestic work.

Anxious to increase his trade, Aaron had stocked his shop with such articles of wear and adornment as were most in request. He had not the means to pay ready money for the stock, but through a friend in Portsmouth, Mr. Moss, with whom the readers of this story have already become acquainted, he obtained credit from wholesale dealers who would have been chary to trust him without a sufficient recommendation.

Apart from the pleasures which his modest success in business afforded him, there was a happiness in store for him to which he looked forward with a sense of profound gratitude. Rachel was about to become a mother. To this fond couple, who seemed to live only for each other, there could be no greater joy than this. They had lost their firstborn, and God was sending another child to bless their days. They never closed their eyes at night, they never rose in the morning, without offering a prayer of thanks to the Most High for his goodness to them. They saw no cloud gathering to darken their happiness.

It was an ordinary event, for which Aaron could hardly have been prepared.

They had been eleven months in Gosport when one morning Aaron, rising first, and going down to his shop, found that burglars had been at work. They had effected an entrance at the back of the house, and had carried away the most valuable articles in the window. The loss, Aaron calculated, would not be less than a hundred pounds.

It was, to him, a serious loss; he had commenced with a very small capital, and his earnings during the year had left only a small margin over his household and trade expenses. His business was growing, it is true, but for the first six months he had barely paid his way; it was to the future he looked to firmly establish himself, and now in one night all his profits were swept away. More than this; if he were called upon to pay his debts he would have but a few pounds left. Rachel, whose health the last week or two had been delicate, her confinement being so near, was in bed by



his directions; he had forbidden her to rise till ten o'clock. It was a matter to be thankful for; he could keep the shock of the loss from her; in her condition bad news might have a serious effect upon her.

He set everything in order, spoke no word of what had occurred to his wife, rearranged the shop window, and took down the shutters. In the course of the day he told Rachel that he intended to close a couple of hours earlier than usual; he had to go to Portsmouth upon business in the evening, and should be absent probably till near midnight.

"You will not mind being alone, my love?" he said.

"Oh, no," she answered, with a tender smile; "I have plenty to occupy me."

She had been for some time busy with her needle preparing for her unborn child.

"But you must go to bed at ten," said Aaron. "I shall lock the shop, and take the key of the back door with me, so that I can let myself in."

She promised to do as he bade her, and in the evening he left her to transact his business. He had no fear that she would be intruded upon; it was not likely that the house would be broken into two nights in succession; besides, with the exception of some pledges of small value which he kept in the safe, there was little now to tempt thieves to repeat their knavish doings. So with fond kisses he bade her good-night.

They stood facing each other, looking into each other's eyes. Rachel's eyes were of a tender gray, with a light so sweet in them that he never looked into them unmoved. He kissed them now with a strange *yearning at his heart.*

"I hope baby's eyes will be like yours, dear love," he said; "the soul of sweetness and goodness shines in them."

She smiled happily, and pressed him fondly to her. Ah, if he had known!

His first business was with the police. He went to the station, and telling the inspector of his loss, said that he wished it to be kept private, because of his fear that it might reach his wife's ears. The inspector replied that it would be advisable under any circumstances. Leaving in the officer's hands a list of the articles that had been stolen, he proceeded to Portsmouth to consult his friend Mr. Moss. That good-hearted gentleman was deeply concerned at the news.

"It is a serious thing, Cohen," he said.

"A very serious thing," replied Aaron gravely, "but I shall overcome it. Only I require time. I promised to pay some bills to-morrow, and I shall require a little stock to replace what I have lost; it would cramp me to do so now."

He mentioned the name of the tradesmen to whom he had given the promise, and asked Mr. Moss to call upon them in the morning and explain the matter to them.

"They will not lose their money," he said; "it will not take me very long to make everything right."

"I will see them," said Mr. Moss, "and I am sure they will give you time. Aaron Cohen's name is a sufficient guarantee."

"I hope it will always be," replied Aaron. "It is very unfortunate just now, because I have extra expenses coming on. The nurse, the doctor——"

"I know, I know. How is Mrs. Cohen?"

"Fairly well, I am glad to say. She knows nothing of what has occurred."

"Of course not, of course not. How could you tell her while she is like that? When Mrs. Moss is in the same way I am always singing and laughing and saying cheerful things to her. Between you and me we expect an addition ourselves in about four months."

"Indeed. That will make——"

"Fourteen," said Mr. Moss, rubbing his hands briskly together. "Increase and multiply. It's our bounden duty, eh, Cohen?"

"Yes," said Aaron rather absently. "And now I must go; it will be late before I reach home, and for all Rachel's promises I expect she will keep awake for me. Good-night, and thank you."

"Nothing to thank me for. Good-night, and good luck."

When Aaron returned to Gosport it was midnight. Winter was coming on and it was cold and dark; buttoning his coat close up to his neck, he hastened his steps.

He was not despondent; misfortune had fallen upon him, but he had confidence in himself, and despite the practical common sense which showed itself in all his actions there was in his nature an underlying current of spiritual belief in divine assistance toward the successful accomplishment of just and worthy endeavor. That it was man's duty to do right, to work, to pray, to be considerate to his neighbors, to make his home cheerful, to be as charitable as his means will allow—*this was his creed*; and it was strengthened by his

conviction that God made himself manifest even upon earth in matters of right and wrong. He did not relegate the expiation of transgression to the future; he did not believe that a man could wipe out the sins of the past year by fasting and praying and beating his breast on the Day of Atonement. Wrongdoing was not to be set aside and forgotten until a convenient hour for repentance arrived. Hourly, daily, a man must keep watch over himself and his actions. This had been his rule of life, and it contributed to his happiness and to the happiness of those around him.

He was within a quarter of a mile of his residence when he was conscious of an unseen disturbance in the air. A distant glare in the sky, the faint echoes of loud voices, stole upon his senses. Agitated as he had been by what had transpired during this long unfortunate day, he could not at first be certain whether these signs were real or spiritual, but presently he discovered that they did not spring from his imagination. The glare in the sky became plainly visible, the loud voices reached his ears. There was a fire in the town, and he was proceeding toward it. Instantly his thoughts, his fears, centered upon Rachel. He ran forward quickly, and found himself struggling through an excited crowd. Flames shot upward; the air was filled with floating sparks of fire. Great God! It was his own house that was being destroyed by the devouring element. He did not heed that; the destruction of his worldly goods did not affect him.

"My wife!" he screamed. "Where is my wife?"

By main force they held him back, for he was rushing into *the flames*.

"Let me go!" he screamed. "Where is my wife?"

"It is all right, Mr. Cohen," a number of voices replied. "She is saved."

"Thank God, oh, thank God!" he cried. "Take me to her. Where is she?"

He cared not for the ruin that had overtaken him; like cool water to a parched throat came the joyful news that she was saved.

"Take me to her. In the name of Heaven, tell me where she is!"

She was in a house at a safe distance from the fire, and thither he was led. Rachel was lying on a couch in her night dress; sympathizing people were about her.

"Rachel, Rachel!" he cried, and fell upon his knees by her side.

She did not answer him; she was insensible.

"Do not agitate yourself, Mr. Cohen," said a voice; it was that of the physician who had been attending to her. "Be thankful that she lives."

"O Lord, I thank thee," murmured the stricken man. "My Rachel lives!"

What mattered all the rest? What mattered worldly ruin and destruction? The beloved of his heart was spared to him.

"You are a sensible man, Mr. Cohen," said the physician, "and you must be calm for her sake. In her condition there will be danger if she witnesses your agitation when she recovers."

"I will be calm, sir," said Aaron humbly. "She is all I have in the world."

*He made no inquiries as to the cause of the fire; he*

did not stir from Rachel's side, but sat with his eyes fixed upon her pallid face. The physician remained with them an hour, and then took his departure, saying he would return early in the morning, and leaving instructions to Aaron what to do.

At sunrise Rachel awoke. Passing one hand over her eyes, she held out the other in a groping, uncertain way. Aaron took it in his, and held it fondly; the pallor left her cheeks.

"It is you, my dear?" she murmured.

"Yes, it is I, my life!" he said in a low and gentle tone.

"You are well—you are safe?"

"I am well—I am safe," he replied. "And you, Rachel—how do you feel?"

"I have a slight headache. It will soon pass away. Oh, my dear husband, how thankful I am! When did you return?"

"Not till you were taken from the house. Do not talk now. Rest, rest, my beloved!"

The endearing words brought a glad smile to her lips.

"I will sleep presently, Aaron. Is the doctor here?"

"No, but he will come soon. Shall I go for him?"

"I can wait, dear; when he comes I should like to speak to him alone."

"You are hurt!" he said, alarmed. "Tell me!"

"I am not hurt, dear; it is only that my head aches a little. He will give me something to relieve me. Have no fear for me, Aaron; I am in no danger; indeed, indeed, I am not!"

"God be praised!"

She drew his head to her breast, and they lay in silence a while, fondly embracing.

"Let me tell you, dear, and then I will go to sleep again. I went to bed at ten, as you bade me, and though I had it in my mind to keep awake for you, I could not do so. I do not know how long I slept, but I awoke in confusion, and there was a strong glare in my eyes. I hardly remember what followed. I heard voices calling to me—Prissy's voice was the loudest, I think—and then I felt that strong arms were around me, and I was being carried from the house. That is all, my dear, till I heard your voice, here. Where am I?"

He informed her, and then, holding him close to her, she fell asleep again. As the clock struck nine the physician entered the room, and Aaron told him what had passed.

"I can spare half an hour," said the physician. "Go and see after your affairs. I will not leave her till you return."

Kissing Rachel tenderly, and smoothing the hair from her forehead, Aaron left the house, and went to his own. Before he departed he learned from the kind neighbors who had given Rachel shelter that they were not in a position to keep her and Aaron with them, and he said that he would make arrangements to remove her in the course of the day, if the doctor thought it would be safe to do so. His own house, he found, was completely destroyed, but he heard of another at no great distance which was to be let furnished for a few weeks, and this he took at once, and installed Prissy therein, to light fires and get the

rooms warm. The arrangement completed, he hastened back to Rachel, between whom and the physician a long consultation had taken place during his absence. At the conclusion of their conversation she had asked him one question:

"Shall I be so all my life, doctor?"

"I fear so," was the reply.

"My poor husband!" she murmured. "My poor, dear husband! Say nothing to him, doctor, I implore you. Let him hear the truth from my lips."

He consented, not sorry to be spared a painful duty. "She is surprisingly well," he said to Aaron, "and in a few days will be able to get about a little, though you must not expect her to be quite strong till her child is born."

The news was so much better than Aaron expected that he drew a deep breath of exquisite relief.

"Can she be removed to-day with safety?" he asked.

"I think so. She will be happier with you alone. Give me your new address; I will call and see her there this evening."

At noon she was taken in a cab to her new abode, and Aaron carried her in and laid her on the sofa before a bright fire. In the evening the physician called according to his promise. "She is progressing famously," he said to Aaron. "Get her to bed early, and it may be advisable that she should keep there a few days. But I shall speak more definitely about this later on. Mr. Cohen, you have my best wishes. You are blessed with a noble wife." Tears shone in Aaron's eyes. "Let me impress upon you," continued the doctor, "to be strong as she is strong; but at present, with



the birth of her child so near, it is scarcely physical power that sustains her. She is supported by a spiritual strength drawn from her love for you and her unborn babe."

With these words the physician left them together. Prissy was gone, and Aaron and Rachel were alone.

They exchanged but few words. Rachel still occupied the couch before the fire, and as she seemed to be dozing Aaron would not disturb her. Thus an hour passed by, and then Rachel said:

"The doctor advises me to go to bed early. Will you help me up, dear?"

She stood on her feet before him, and as his eyes rested on her face a strange fear entered his heart.

"Come, my life," he said.

"A moment, dear husband," she said. "I have something to tell you, something that will grieve you. I do not know how it happened, nor does the good doctor know. He has heard of only one such case before. I am not in pain; I do not suffer. It is much to be grateful for, and I am humbly, humbly grateful. It might have been so much worse."

"Rachel, my beloved," said Aaron, placing his hands on her shoulders.

"Keep your arms about me, my honored husband. Let me feel your dear hands, your dear face. Kiss me, Aaron. May I tell you now?"

"Tell me now, my beloved."

"Look into my eyes, dear. I cannot look into yours. Dear husband, I am blind!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

### DIVINE CONSOLATION.

**THE** shock of this revelation was so overwhelming that for a few moments Aaron was unable to speak. In the words of the prophet, "His tongue clave to the roof of his mouth." His soul was plunged in darkness, and a feeling of passionate rebellion racked his heart. That upon his sweet and innocent wife should have fallen an infliction so awful seemed to blot all brightness out of the world. Nay, more—it seemed to blot out the principle of justice, to render it a mockery and a snare. The sentiment which animated him was one of horror and indignation, and he yielded to it unresistingly. What had Rachel done to deserve the cruel blow? Not with a crown of sorrow but with a crown of glory should she have been crowned. And was it not natural that he should rebel against it? He was her champion, her protector, her defender; she had no one else. Should he stand tamely by and show no sense of the injustice which had been inflicted upon her!

Very, very rarely had Aaron been dominated by so stubborn a mood; very, very rarely had he allowed it to take possession of him; and never in a single instance on his own account. Mere worldly misfortune, however disastrous in its effect, he had invari-

ably met with philosophic calm and fortitude. Many reverses had attended him, and he had borne them bravely, as a man should, as it is a man's duty to do. With a courage which may be said to be heroic had he accepted each successive stroke, and had immediately applied himself to the task of repairing the breach. No faint-hearted soldier he, sitting down and weeping by the roadside when he received a wound. To be up and doing—that was his creed. These were but ordinary checks which a man must be prepared to encounter in his course through life; weak, indeed, would he prove himself to be who did not at once set to work manfully and energetically to make the best instead of the worst of each rebuff. Aaron's keen gift of humor and his talent for justifiable device were of immense assistance to him in these encounters, and in his conversations with Rachel he was in the habit of throwing so droll a light upon the difficulties with which he was contending that he lifted from her heart and from his own a weight which otherwise would have remained there and impeded his efforts. He treated every personal ailment which visited him, and every little incident he met with, in the same spirit, laughing away Rachel's distress and bearing his pain without the least symptom of querulousness. "You seem almost to like pain, my dear," she had said. "There is pleasure in pain," he had answered; "think of the relief." Thus did he make the pack upon his shoulders easy to carry, and thus did he contribute to Rachel's enjoyment of life.

Over and above these lesser features in his character *reigned the great factors truth and justice.* He took

no credit to himself that he was never guilty of a meanness; it was simply that it was not in his nature to fall so low, and that he walked instinctively in the right path. He had frequently conversed with Rachel upon the doctrine of responsibility, arguing that children born of vicious parents should not be made accountable for their evil acts to the fullest extent. "It is an inheritance," he argued, "and it is not they who are wholly guilty. My parents gave me an inheritance of cheerfulness and good temper, and I am more grateful for it than I should be if they had left me a bag of gold." Upon questions of right and wrong his good sense and his rectitude led him unerringly to the just side, and when his own interests were involved in a decision he was called upon to make in such and such an issue he never for a moment hesitated. To have benefited himself at the expense of justice would have been in his eyes a sin which was not to be forgiven. A sin of unconscious omission could be expiated, but a sin of deliberate commission would have weighed forever on his soul. Could such a man as this, a devout and conscientious Jew, faithful every day of his life in the observances of his religion, with a firm belief in the mercy and goodness of the Eternal God, and with the principles of truth and justice shining ever before him, be guilty of such a sin? It will be presently seen.

So far himself, considered as an entity. Had he been alone in life, with no other life so welded into his own as to be inseparable from it, it is scarcely possible that he could have been guilty of a conscious wrong, for his soul would have risen in revolt against the sug-

gestion. Had he been alone misfortunes might have fallen upon him unceasingly, poverty might have been his lot through all his days, disease might have racked his bones—he would have borne all with tranquillity and resignation, and would have lifted up his voice in praise of the Most High to his last hour. Of such stuff are martyrs made; from such elements springs the lofty ideal into which, once in a generation, is breathed the breath of life, the self-sacrificing hero who sheds his blood and dies with a glad light on his face in the battle of right against might, in the battle of weak innocence against the ruthless hand of power. But Aaron was not alone; Rachel was by his side, leaning upon his heart, looking to him for joy, for peace, for happiness. And when he suffered it was through her he suffered; and when he was oppressed with sorrow it was through her he sorrowed. So keen was his sympathy with her, so intense was his love for her, that if only her finger ached he was in pain. We are but human after all, and no man can go beyond a man's strength. Legends are handed down to us of divine inspiration falling upon a man who, thus inspired, becomes a leader, a hero, a prophet; but in that man's heartstrings are not entwined the tender fingers of wife and children. As blades of grass which we can rub into nothingness between our fingers force their upward way to air and sunshine through adamantine stones, as rocks are worn away by the trickling of drops of water, so may a man's sublimest qualities, so may a man's heart and soul be pierced and reft by human love.

*It was this absorbing sentiment that agitated Aaron*

when Rachel revealed to him that she was blind; it was this that struck him dumb.

Meekly and patiently she stood before him—he had fallen back a step—and waited for him to speak. He did not utter a word.

Presently her sweet voice stole upon his senses.

“Aaron, my beloved, why are you silent? Why do you not speak to me?”

He lifted his head and groaned.

“Ah, do not groan, dear husband,” she continued. “It is for me you suffer, but I am not suffering—did I not tell you so? It is, indeed, the truth. Look into my face; you will see no pain there. I need you more than ever now. Next to God you are my rock, my salvation. He has cast this affliction upon me out of his goodness and wisdom. Let us lift our voices in his praise.”

And from her lips flowed in the ancient tongue the sublime prayer:

“Hear, O Israel, the Eternal, our God! the Eternal is One. And thou shalt love the Eternal, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall speak of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

An angel's voice could not have been more melodious and sweet, and the beauty of the prayer acquired truly a divine strength through Rachel's intoning of the pious words. But it was not only her voice that

resounded in the room. The moment she commenced to pray rebellion against fate's decree melted out of Aaron's heart, and pity took its place; he was restored to his better self. Holding her hand, he joined her in prayer, but not in so loud a voice as usual; he followed her, as it were, and was led by her, and when the prayer was ended her head sank upon his breast, and her arms entwined themselves around his neck.

"You are resigned, my dear?" she whispered.

"I bow my head," he answered; "the Lord's will be done!"

"I could not keep it from you any longer. I was blind when I opened my eyes in the house of the good people who gave me shelter; I was blind when you sat by my side there; but I feared to tell you; I wished to speak to the doctor first. It was so strange, so sudden, that I hoped it would not last. I awoke with the cry of fire in my ears, and as I leaped from bed the bright glare of the flames seemed to strike sight out of my eyes. I fainted, and remember nothing more; only that when I opened my eyes again I could not see. It was merciful that there was no pain. Oh, my dear husband, I am so sorry for you, so sorry, so sorry!"

"Rachel, dear Rachel, dear life of my life, it is not for me you should grieve—it is for yourself."

"No, dear love, I do not grieve for myself. Should I not rather rejoice? Because I know, I know"—she put his hand to her lips and kissed it, then held it to her heart—"that you will bear with me, that I shall not be a trouble to you."

"A trouble to me, Rachel! You are dearer to me

than ever—more precious to me than ever. Oh, my dear, I never loved you as I love you now!"

"How sweet, how sweet!" she murmured. "How beautiful is life! No woman was ever blessed as I am blessed! And soon, dear love, we shall have with us another evidence of the Lord's great mercy. Our child, our darling, will be here. Ah, what happiness!"

Was there already in her heart the shadow of an abiding sorrow springing from the knowledge that she would never see the face of her unborn child, that she would never be able to look into the beautiful eyes which in a short time would open upon the world? Aaron had hoped that baby's eyes would be like hers, but she would never know from personal evidence whether they were or not. If such a sorrow was making itself felt she kept it to herself and guarded it jealously, lest Aaron should participate in it. Her face was radiant as they continued to converse, and by her loving words she succeeded in thoroughly banishing from Aaron's soul the rebellious promptings by which he had first been agitated. Thus did Rachel, to whom the light of the universe was henceforth as night, become the divine consoler in the home.

"I am tired, dear. Will you lead me to our room?"

He took her in his arms and carried her up, as he would have carried a child, and this new office of love, and indeed everything he did for her, drew them spiritually closer to each other.

When she was in bed she asked him to tell her about the fire, and if he would be a great loser by it. He softened the loss, said that he was well insured, that *they had* a good friend in Mr. Moss, and that it



would not be long before he was on his feet again. Content and happiness were expressed on her face as she listened.

"It will be a comfort to you to know," he said, "that no one will lose anything by me; every demand will be met; every penny will be paid. In my mansion"—his study of the law and his devotion to his faith led him occasionally into a biblical phrase—"are three stars: First, the Eternal God; next, you, my beloved; next, our good name."

"That is safe in your keeping, dear," she said.

"And will ever be, so far as human endeavor can aid me. You will be glad to hear, too, that the townspeople sympathize with us in our trouble."

"I am very glad; it could hardly have been otherwise. Who that lives to know you does not learn to honor you?" She held his hand in a tender clasp and kissed it repeatedly. "I will tell you something. I am beginning already to acquire a new sense. When you look at me I feel it—you are looking at me now. When your eyes are not on my face I know it. I shall learn a good deal very soon, very soon! I do not intend to be a burden to you." This was said with tender gayety.

"You can never be that." He touched her eyes. "Henceforth I am your eyes. It is a poor return, for you, Rachel, are my very life."

"Dear husband! Dear love! Kiss me. I want to fall asleep with those words in my ears. You will not stop up long?"

"I will go down and put out the lights, and see that all is safe. Then I will come up at once. Sleep, my life, sleep!"

He passed his fingers caressingly across her forehead, and she fell asleep with a smile on her lips.

He stole softly from the room in his stocking feet, and went down and made the house safe; then he returned to the bedroom.

The smile had left Rachel's lips; her face was paler, and there was a worn look on it. A terrible fear entered his heart. "O God, if she should die! O God, if I should lose her!" He took his silk taleth from its bag, and wrapping it around him put on his hat, and stood and prayed, with his face to the east.

"How precious is thy mercy, O God! The children of men take refuge under the shadow of thy wing. They are satisfied with the richness of thy house, and thou causeth them to drink of the stream of thy delight. For with thee is the fountain of life, by thy light only do we see light. Oh, continue thy mercy unto them who know thee and thy righteousness to the upright of heart!"

One line in the prayer he repeated again and again: "For with thee is the fountain of life, and by thy light only do we see light." And so he prayed till midnight, and the one supplication into which all else was merged was sent forth with touching pathos from his very heart of hearts: "O Lord of the Universe, Giver of all good, humbly I beseech thee to spare my beloved! Take her not from me! Let her live, let her live to bless my days! Let not darkness overwhelm me! It is thy hand that directs the fountain of life."

And Rachel slept on, and dreamed of the child whose face she was never to see upon earth.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### IN THE NEW HOUSE.

THREE weeks of great anxiety followed. Despite the courage with which Rachel had borne the sudden visitation of blindness her physical strength did not hold out, and, by the doctor's orders, she kept her bed. During these weeks Aaron had enough to do to put his affairs in order, and he had the additional trouble that matters turned out worse than he had anticipated. For security's sake, and to set the borrowers at ease, he transferred all the pledges that had been saved to another pawnbroker; those that were destroyed he considered himself bound in honor and common honesty to make good; he made no demur to the claims that were brought against them, but settled them promptly, and settled also all his trade debts. What with all this harassing business and his domestic sorrows he was occupied day and night, but he was careful that Rachel should not suspect how things were with him. The doctor came daily, and Rachel's time was very near. At every visit Aaron watched his face for hopeful news of Rachel's condition, but the doctor volunteered no information, and only gave instructions to do this or that. This reticence was torture to Aaron, and one day he begged the doctor to conceal nothing from him.

"There is nothing to conceal," said the doctor. "Her state is critical, but what else could be expected? Consider what she has passed through."

"I think of nothing else, of nothing else," said Aaron, his fingers working convulsively, for a question was trembling on his lips which he felt he must ask, but to which he could scarcely give utterance. "Doctor, will she live?"

The doctor bit his lip as he gazed upon Aaron's misery. "We will do our best; but remember, we are all in God's hands." And with these words, and a look of compassion, he departed.

Aaron stood motionless a while. We are all in God's hands! How often has that been said, and how terrible is its import! Human science and skill have done all it is in their power to do—the rest is with God. Aaron reasoned the true meaning away.

"We are all in God's hands," he murmured, "old and young, rich and poor, the strong and the feeble alike. It is so with one and all. I thank God he did not tell me to prepare for the worst!"

He drew comfort not from what was said, but from what was not said. He continued to commune with himself.

"How can she be otherwise than weak? And doctors sometimes think it their duty not to look on the brightest side. My Rachel will be spared to me. God will not take her away."

He went up to her; a nurse he had engaged was in the room; she could come for only a week, her services at the end of that time being required elsewhere. She put her fingers to her lips as he entered.

"Is she asleep?" he asked in a whisper.

She nodded in reply, but when he approached the bed Rachel held out her hand to him.

"Nurse thought you were asleep, dear," he said, bending down to her.

"I may have been," she answered. "I fall off into a doze a dozen times an hour, it seems, but I always know when you are near me." She put her hand to her head.

"Are you in pain, my life?"

"Oh, no. I am rather weak, but I shall get strong soon. Whenever I doze I see our dear one. Aaron, dear love, do not be anxious for me; I shall soon hold our darling in my arms."

The nurse gave him a warning look not to encourage her to talk, and understanding the silent monition, he kissed Rachel tenderly and went down to muse and pray.

The settlement of all his debts had left him almost a beggar. He owed not a shilling, except to the doctor, who had said nothing about his account; the week's money for the nurse was carefully put away; he could not have afforded to engage her for a longer term, for all the money he had left in the world amounted to barely two pounds. What was he to do when that was spent? Commence business again upon borrowed capital? But who would lend it to him? It was no small sum that would be required, and all his friends, with the exception of Mr. Moss, were poor. Mr. Moss was comparatively a new friend, and he could not expect him to render such substantial assistance. *It would be unreasonable to ask for so large a loan,*

say, as fifty pounds, for that was the least that he could begin again with; besides, he would be sure to be met with a refusal. But what was he to do?

He thrust these worldly contemplations aside, and, indeed, it was impossible for him to dwell upon them with a heavier sorrow at his door. He trusted in God—yes; but he knew that a man must work for his livelihood. Well, he would work; he was willing and ready for any honest occupation; but he must wait—for what? He stepped into the passage, and softly ascending the stairs, listened at Rachel's door. As he stood there the nurse came out.

"Go for the doctor," she whispered.

He flew. There was no thought in his mind now of his worldly troubles; he thought only of his beloved wife and unborn child. The doctor was not in, but was expected in a quarter of an hour, and would be sure to come round at once. Leaving an urgent entreaty not to delay a moment, Aaron hastened back to his house, and on the road found himself intercepted by Prissy, who had grown taller but no stouter since the night upon which she introduced herself to him. By reason of her increased height she looked thinner and scraggier than ever; as usual Victoria Regina, who had grown plumper and rounder, was in the girl's arms.

"Mr. Cohen, Mr. Cohen!" cried Prissy.

"I can't stop now," he replied, passing her quickly.

But Prissy's long legs were as active as his, and though Victoria Regina was a heavy weight to carry, she kept pace with him.

"D'yer know wot everybody's saying about yer, Mr. Cohen?"

"Never mind, never mind, my good girl; I have no time to listen."

"They're saying, everybody is," continued Prissy, "that yer as good as ruined, and that you 'aven't got a shilling left to pay yer way with."

"What does it matter what people say, Prissy? Never listen to tittle-tattle."

"'Ow's it to be 'elped, Mr. Cohen, when they ding it in yer ears? Mr. Whimpole, he ses he sor wot was coming all along, and when I ups and gives 'im a bit o' my mind he slaps my face, he does, and pushes me into the gutter. I don't mind that, but no one's going to speak agin yer when I'm by. It aint likely after all yer've done for me."

"You are a good girl, but take no notice of what Mr. Whimpole says. There are many here who still have a good word for me."

"Plenty, sir, and that's wot makes Mr. Whimpole mad; he can't make 'em think as he wants 'em to. You look ill, Mr. Cohen. I 'ope missis is no wus, I do."

"She is still weak and ill, Prissy; but she will get well soon—eh, Prissy?—she will get well soon?"

He cast a swift, anxious look upon her; even from the lips of this poor girl he sought the comfort of a consoling word.

"Yes, sir, she's sure to. Don't you worry yerself, Mr. Cohen. Gawd won't let nothink wrong 'appen to 'er. Wot did she say 'erself to me more nor once? 'Be a good gal,' she ses, 'and tell the truth, and be as kind as yer can to everybody, and Gawd 'll look after yer.' And aint she good, sir? and does she ever say

anything but the truth? and aint she as kind as kind can be to everybody about 'er? Why, it's in everybody's mouth, 'xcept Mr. Whimpole's. She's sure to get well, Mr. Cohen, and then yer'll let me see 'er, sir, won't yer?"

"Yes, Prissy, yes," said Aaron, laying his hand for a moment on Prissy's tangled hair; he had reached the door of his house, and was unlocking the door. "She will get well, please God, and you shall see her. Thank you, thank you, my good girl, and now run away."

"I'm off, Mr. Cohen," said Prissy; "this is going to bring yer luck, it is," and slipping a large paper parcel into his hand, she scuttled away.

He did not know what it was he held until he reached his room, and then he examined it. When he removed the paper he saw a horseshoe and two penny pieces, which had been rubbed bright with sand, so that they shone like gold. Something shone in Aaron's eyes as he gazed at the humble offering; he smiled wistfully, and muttering, "It is an omen of good fortune; God bless you, little Prissy!" put the shoe and the pennies carefully aside. Then he stepped softly upstairs, and softly tapped at the bedroom door.

"How is she, nurse?"

"Bearing up wonderfully, sir."

"Thank God! The doctor will be here presently. I will wait for him at the street door."

He had not long to wait; in a very short time he saw the welcome form turning the corner, and the doctor, with a friendly, smiling nod, passed into the house.

Aaron paced to and fro in the room below, and



waited for the word that was to bring joy or sorrow to his soul. He had put his slippers on, in order that his footsteps should not be heard. In such times of tribulation his thoughts were invariably directed to the divine footstool; as with all devout Jews prayer was part of his life, and never, since the day of his birth, had he prayed so earnestly and fervently as now. Every few moments he paused in the supplications he was sending forth, and stepped softly into the passage, and listened. He heard no sound, not a sob, not a cry; then he returned to his room, and resumed his prayers. His heart was with Rachel, and he knew that she was thinking of him. In the light of the perfect love that existed between them, in the anxious expectancy of these lagging minutes, what mattered poverty or riches, what mattered mere worldly misfortune? A stout spirit, a strong shoulder to the wheel, and all would be well; thus much could a man do with a cheerful heart. But here and now he was helpless, impotent; here and now was impending a graver issue which he was powerless to influence. A life—the life of his beloved—was hanging in the balance; and all that he could do was to wait and hope and pray.

Hush! What was that? An infant's wail—the cry of a newborn child! With his heart in his ears he stood in the passage, then sank upon the stairs, with his face in his hands. His child lived—but Rachel! how was it with her?

The bedroom door opened and closed, and the doctor came down. The passage was dark, for it was now evening, and Aaron could not see the doctor's face. Taking Aaron's arm, which shook in his grasp like a

leaf in a strong wind, the doctor led Aaron into the sitting room and lit the gas.

"Doctor!" implored Aaron, with clasped hands.

"You have a little girl."

"And Rachel—my wife!"

"Be comforted. She is in no immediate danger. She is a brave and noble woman. I will return in a couple of hours. The nurse will tell you when you can go up and see her."

Aaron laid his head upon the table and wept.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE DOCTOR SPEAKS PLAINLY TO AARON COHEN.

"AARON!"

"My beloved!"

"Is our darling beautiful?"

"Very beautiful—like you."

"You spoil me, dear; you think too much of me."

"It is not possible, Rachel. Loving you as I do, with my whole heart, there is still some wisdom in my love. Rachel, without you my life would not be perfect; without you I should be a broken man."

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" she said, clasping his hand tight. "It is out of my power to repay you for all your goodness to me."

"You repay me every moment of your life. Not for a throne would I exchange my place by your side; not for a palace would I exchange my humble home with you to hallow it." Their lips met, and there was silence in the room a while.

"Dear husband, you are not disappointed that our child is a girl?"

"I am rejoiced that we have with us a daughter in Israel. What greater happiness could I desire? When you are strong, when I hear your footsteps about the house again, all will be well."

A holy joy dwelt in her face. "My darling, my dar-

ling!" she murmured as she held the sleeping babe to her breast. "I had a fear, but it is gone—a fear that our precious one would be born blind, as I am. Thank God, I did not bring that misfortune upon her. What happiness entered my heart when the doctor told me that her eyes were bright and beautiful. If only the gracious Lord will not take her—if only he will spare her to live to an honored old age!"

"He will, he will, my beloved! We must not talk any more. Sleep and grow strong."

He sat by her bedside in silence, gazing upon her face, which was as the face of an angel, and then he stole softly downstairs. He had much to occupy his thoughts; Rachel's danger happily passed, as he hoped, he could turn his attention to his worldly affairs, which indeed, being at a desperate pass, would have forced themselves to the front under any circumstances. By the doctor's orders he had been compelled to make certain purchases which had not only emptied his purse, but had driven him to the necessity of parting with the few articles of jewelry which he and Rachel possessed. These proceeds gone he was an absolute beggar.

Never in his life had he been placed in so serious a position. Difficulties had been encountered and confronted with courage and success, times of embarrassment had been tided over, losses had been made good, and he had fought his way cheerfully; but now his heart sank within him at the prospect that was opening out. Rachel needed not only care and unremitting attention, but delicacies in the shape of food to keep up her strength. Nourishing soups, a glass of port

wine, a chicken—these were no trifles to a man in Aaron's position; and unable to afford the regular services of a servant, he had to look after these matters himself, to perform domestic work, to cook, and to keep the whole house in order. The nurse's attention was devoted solely to the sick room, and he could not therefore look to assistance from her; Prissy made her appearance daily, but Aaron dismissed her quickly, feeling the injustice of accepting services for which he could not pay. It was no easy matter to get rid of Prissy, who was not only willing but anxious to remain, and she feebly protested against being turned away so unceremoniously; her protests would have been more vigorous had she not entertained a certain awe of Aaron's strength of character, before which she, as it were, was compelled to prostrate herself. Thus Aaron, from force of circumstance and from his inherent sense of justice, was thrown entirely upon his own resources.

Counting the money in his purse, he calculated that it was sufficient to last for nine or ten days. In four days the nurse would take her departure, and then he and Rachel and their babe would be left alone in the house. At the expiration of less than a week after that he must be prepared to face the most serious difficulties. He had friends in London, to whom he had already written, and had received replies of regret that they were unable to assist him. Mr. Moss had been so good a friend that he hardly dared appeal again to him, and he resolved to leave it to the last moment. With a troubled heart, and hardly having *the strength* to hope against hope, he went about the

house and attended to his duties. The four days passed, the nurse, having taken her leave of Rachel, came down to Aaron to receive her wages and bid him good-by. He paid her with a sad smile, and thanked her for her services. The "good-day" exchanged, she lingered a moment. With quick apprehension he divined why she delayed.

"You have something to say to me, nurse, about my wife."

"Yes, Mr. Cohen, I have," she replied, "and I am glad you have mentioned it, as I did not know how to bring it out." She paused again.

"Well, nurse?"

"I think you ought to know, Mr. Cohen, that your wife is not so well as you suppose."

"Nurse!"

"She keeps it from you, sir, and has begged me not to alarm you, but it is my duty. No, sir, she is far from well, and is not getting on as she ought. She grows weaker and weaker—and baby, too, is not thriving. It is that which keeps Mrs. Cohen back."

"What can be done, nurse?" asked Aaron, the agony of his feelings depicted on his countenance.

"It isn't for me to say, Mr. Cohen. If I were you I would ask the doctor to tell me plainly."

"I will, I will. Nurse, does she suffer?"

"She's just the one to suffer, sir, and to say nothing. It would be a dreadful thing for you, sir, if——" But here the woman stopped suddenly and bit her lip. She had said more than she intended. "Good-day, sir, and I hope we may all be wrong."

He caught her arm. "No, no, nurse. I will ask the

doctor to speak plainly to me, but he will not be here till to-morrow, and I cannot go to him and leave my wife and child alone in the house. Finish what you were about to say. 'It would be a dreadful thing if——'

"Well, sir, it is best to face the truth. If your poor lady was to die."

"Great God! There is danger, then?"

"I am afraid there is, sir. Don't take on so, sir, don't! I am sorry I spoke."

"You have done what is right," Aaron groaned.

"We must all of us be prepared, sir; trouble comes to all of us."

"Alas, it is a human heritage! But you do not know what this means to me—you do not know what it means to me!"

"Perhaps I have made things out worse than they are; I hope so, I am sure. But you ask the doctor, sir, and don't give way. I shall think of your lady a good deal when I am gone."

With that, and with a sympathetic look at him, the woman departed.

At length, at length, the truth had been spoken; at length, at length, he knew the worst. It was as if a sentence of death had been pronounced. His Rachel, his beloved wife, the tenderest, the truest that man had ever been blessed with, was to be taken from him. His child, also, perhaps; but that was a lesser grief, upon which he had no heart to brood. His one overwhelming anxiety was for Rachel, who, as it now seemed to him, was lying at death's door in the room *above*.

He had some soup ready, and he took a basin up to her.

"Can you drink this, dear?"

"I will try."

He assisted her to rise, and put a pillow at her back. As he fed her he watched her face, and he saw that it had grown wan and thin. It was well for both of them that she could not see him; the sight of his agony would have deepened her sufferings and added to his own. With wonderful control he spoke to her with some semblance of cheerfulness, and his voice and words brought a smile to her lips. So through the day he ministered to her, and every time he left her room his fears grew stronger. He did not expect the doctor till the following day, and was surprised when he made his appearance at nightfall.

"I happened to be passing," he said to Aaron, "and I thought I would drop in to see how you are getting along."

When they came down from the sick room Aaron observed a graver expression on his face.

"It is unfortunate that you have no nurse, Mr. Cohen," he said; "your wife needs constant care and watchfulness."

"She will have it, doctor. Is she any better, sir? How is she progressing?"

"She is still the same, still the same; no better and no worse."

"It is not in her favor, doctor, that she remains the same?"

"No, I cannot conscientiously say it is. At this stage a little additional strength would be of great



assistance to her. Nature's forces require rallying—but we will hope for the best, Mr. Cohen."

"We will, doctor, but will hope avail?"

His sad voice struck significantly upon the doctor's ears. "Perhaps not, but it is a consolation."

"There are human griefs, sir, for which there is no consolation. I cannot wrest my thoughts from the selfish view. There are sorrows that come so close home as to take complete possession of us."

"It is human, Mr. Cohen, it is natural; but we must not shut out resignation, fortitude, submission."

"Doctor, will you speak plainly to me? It will be merciful."

"What is it you wish to know?"

"Tell me exactly how my wife and child are, so that I may be prepared"—his voice faltered—"for the worst."

"You do not know, then?"

"I fear—but I do not know."

"We doctors have frequently hard duties to perform, Mr. Cohen—duties which to others appear cruel. I will speak plainly; it will be best. It is due to your wife's gentle and loving nature that I have not done so before, and I yielded to her imploring solicitations, deeming it likely that you would discover the state of the case from your own powers of observation. Mr. Cohen, I have rarely had so sad and affecting an experience as I find here. It would be wrong for me to say that your wife is not in danger; she has been in danger for some days past, and it is only an inward moral strength that has supported her through the crisis. She has still a vital power which, under certain *conditions*, will be of immense assistance to her, which

will enable her—so far as it is in human power to judge—to pull through. You will gather from my words that her safety, nay, her life, depends not so much upon herself as upon others—upon you to some extent, but to a much greater extent upon her babe. It is her deep love for you both that has sustained her, that still sustains her. Were anything to happen to either of you I should fear the gravest results. It would react upon her, and in her delicate state there would be no hope.”

“I am physically strong and well, doctor; nothing is likely to happen to me. Her danger, then, lies in our child?”

“You have clearly expressed it. Her life hangs upon the life of her child. So fine and delicate are her susceptibilities, so profound is her love for those who are dear to her, that I, a doctor, who is supposed to be nothing if he is not scientific, am compelled to confess that here my learned theories are at fault. I will no longer disguise from you that her life hangs upon the balance.”

“And our child, doctor, how is it with her?”

“I can answer you with less certainty. Something of the delicate susceptibilities of the mother has in the course of nature entered her child’s being. The baby is not strong, but she may grow into strength; it is as yet a problem to be solved, and a physician’s skill is almost powerless to help to a happy issue. Hope, Mr. Cohen, hope; and in bidding you hope, and in explaining matters to you, I have not said all that it is necessary for me to say. There remains something more.”

"One question first, doctor," said Aaron in a hushed voice; "if our child lives there is hope that my wife will live."

"A strong hope; I speak with confidence."

"And if our child dies?"

"The mother will die. Forgive me for my cruel frankness."

"It is the best kindness you can show me. You have something more to tell me."

"Something almost as cruel, but it must be spoken. Mr. Cohen, your wife has been severely tried; the shock of the fire, the shock of her sudden blindness, coming so close upon her expected confinement, have left their effects upon her. If things take a favorable turn with her it will be imperative, in the course of the next three or four weeks—earlier if possible, and if she can be removed with safety—that you take her to a softer climate, where she can be nursed into permanent strength. We are going to have a severe winter, and I will not answer for its effects upon her. From three or four weeks hence till the spring in a warmer atmosphere, where there are no fogs or east winds, will be of invaluable service to her, will set her up probably for many years to come. You must recognize this yourself, and if by any possibility or sacrifice you can manage it you must do so."

"It is vitally necessary, doctor?"

"It is, I have no hesitation in saying, vitally necessary. And now good-night, Mr. Cohen. I leave my best wishes behind me."

## CHAPTER XX.

### A MOMENTOUS NIGHT.

EACH day, each hour, Aaron became more anxious and troubled. In the doctor's plain speaking there was no reading between the lines, and no possible mistaking of his meaning. Aaron saw clearly what was before him, but he could not see a way out of his difficulties, nor to doing what he was told it was imperative upon him that he should do, in the happy event of Rachel's coming safely through her present crisis. There was no apparent change in her; she lay weak and powerless in her bed, receiving Aaron always with sweet and patient words, and nursing her child as well as her feeble state would allow her. The condition of the babe pained and troubled him. There was no indication of suffering, no querulousness in the child; it was simply that she lay supine, as though life were flowing quietly out of her. Every time Aaron crept up to the bedside and found the babe asleep he leaned anxiously over her to catch the sound of her breathing; and so faint and soft was her respiration that again and again he was smitten with a fear that she had passed away. Acutely sensitive and sensible now of every sign in his wife, it became with him an absolute conviction that the doctor spoke the truth when he declared that her life and the life of her babe were in-

separable—that if one lived the other would live, that if one died the other would die. During this torturing time strange thoughts oppressed him, and oppressed him more powerfully because he scarcely understood them. The tenor of these thoughts resolved itself into the one burning desire to do something to keep his wife with him even if she should lose her babe, but toward the accomplishment of this he felt that he could do nothing. He was but an instrument; if he were to be successful in steering his beloved to a haven of peace and health it must be through outside influences which up to the present were not visible to him. “Show me the way, oh, gracious Lord, show me the way!” This was his constant prayer, and although in less agitated times he would have blamed himself for praying for a seeming impossibility, he encouraged himself in it now, in the dim and despairing hope that some miracle would occur to further his agonizing desire.

Meanwhile his funds had run completely out, and with spiritual sight he saw the wolf approaching the door. He had not the means to pay for the necessities of the next twenty-four hours. Then it was that he resolved to make his appeal to Mr. Moss. He would tell him everything, he would reveal his hapless position in the plainest terms, and he would beg for an immediate temporary loan of money which he would promise to faithfully repay when the cloud was lifted from his house.

It was evening, a cold and bitter evening. The snow had been falling heavily, a fierce wind was raging. He thought of Rachel, homeless and hungry, and his heart was torn with woe. It seemed as if her life depended

upon him; he was her shield; could he not keep desolation and despair from her—could he not keep death from her? He did not know that the angel was already in his house.

The doctor had paid a visit earlier in the day, and had spoken even more gravely of Rachel.

"Much depends," he said, "upon the next day or two. For some days past she has been silently suffering, and I have succeeded in piercing the veil of sorrow which hangs upon her soul. She fears that her child will not live, and if unhappily her fears are confirmed——"

He did not finish the sentence; there was no need for further words to convey his meaning.

"This harrowing thought," he continued, "keeps her from rest, prevents her sleeping. There are periods of sickness when sleep means life; I will send round a sleeping draught, which you will give her at eight o'clock to-night; it will insure her oblivion for a good twelve hours, and if when she wakes all is well with the child all will be well with her."

"Can you tell me, doctor, why this fear has grown stronger within her these last few days?"

"The babe lies quietly in her arms; she does not hear its voice, and only by its soft breathing can she convince herself that it lives. Tender accents\* from the child she has brought into the world would fall as a blessing upon her sorrowing heart. At any moment the child may find its voice; let us hope that it will very soon."

The sleeping draught was sent to Aaron, and it was now on the table. The hour was six; in a couple of

hours he would give it to her; and while he waited he sat down to write his letter to Mr. Moss. It was a long letter, for he had much to say, and he was but half-way through when a postman's knock summoned him to the street door. He hurried there quickly, so that the knock should not be repeated, and to his surprise received a telegram. It was from Mr. Moss, and it informed him that that gentleman was coming to see him upon a very important matter, and that he was to be sure not to leave home that night. Aaron wondered what this important matter could be, and there was a joyful feeling in his heart that the telegram might be the presage of good fortune; he knew enough of Mr. Moss' kindly nature to be convinced that he would not be the herald of bad news.

"There is a rift in the clouds," he murmured as he pondered over the message; "I see the light, I see the light!"

Would Mr. Moss' errand open up the means of giving Rachel the benefit of soft air and sunshine in a more genial clime? He prayed that it might, and he had never prayed more fervently. But the night was inclement, and Mr. Moss might not be able in consequence to pay the promised visit. Time pressed; the necessity was imminent, and would brook no delay; therefore he determined to finish his letter, and to post it this night in the event of Mr. Moss not making his appearance.

It wanted a few minutes to eight when his task was completed. He read the letter over and addressed an envelope, but did not stamp it; he had but one stamp, and every penny was of importance. He looked at

the clock; eight o'clock. With gentle steps he went up to Rachel.

"It is time for the draught, my love," he said.

"I will take it, dear."

He poured it into a glass, and she drank it reclining in his arms.

"If our dear one lives, Aaron," said Rachel, "we will call her Ruth, after your mother."

"It shall be so, love," answered Aaron, laying her head upon the pillow. "God will vouchsafe the mercy to us. She will live, Rachel, she will live." Desirous that she should not talk now that she had taken the sleeping draught he kissed her tenderly and would have left her, but she held him by the hand.

"Has the doctor told you that I am in sorrow, Aaron?"

"You have the gift of divinity, love. Yes, he has told me, and he said that to-morrow perhaps, please God, you will hear our darling's voice."

"Did he say so? Heaven bless him. She is sleeping?"

"Yes, beloved."

"I pray that the good doctor may be right. I shall dream of it. To-morrow—perhaps to-morrow! Ah, what happiness! It needs but that, dear husband, it needs but that! How tired you must be with all that you are doing for me! Kiss me again. God guard you."

And so she fell asleep.

The small fire in the room required attention, and Aaron arranged each piece of coal and cinder with scrupulous care; never had there been so much need



for thrift as now. In all his movements there was not the least sound; so softly did he step that his feet might have been shod with velvet pile. One of Rachel's arms was lying exposed on the counterpane, he gently shifted it beneath the warm coverings; then he quitted the apartment and closed the door upon his wife and child—and upon the angel of death, who was standing by the bedside to receive a departing soul.

Aaron did not return to his room below; he stood by the open street door, looking anxiously up and down for Mr. Moss, and thinking with sadness that if that gentleman delayed his visit he would be compelled in the morning to part for a time with his silver-mounted pipe, which was the only article of any value that was left to him. Of all his personal belongings he cherished this pipe the most; it was Rachel's gift, and she had often filled it for him. It was not between his lips at the present moment; he had no heart to smoke. For nearly an hour he stood upon the watch, interrupting it only for the purpose of creeping upstairs to see if Rachel were still sleeping. At nine o'clock Mr. Moss made his welcome appearance in the street; even as he turned the corner at a distance of many yards Aaron recognized him. He was enveloped in his great fur coat, which was pulled up close to his ears; a lighted cigar was between his lips, and he was humming an operatic air as he puffed at it.

"Why, Cohen," said Mr. Moss in a hearty tone, "what are you standing at the door for on such a cold night?"

"I have been expecting you," Aaron answered, "and



I did not wish you to knock. Rachel has taken a sleeping draught, and must not be disturbed."

"Yes, yes, I understand," said Mr. Moss, accompanying his friend into the house. "How is she?"

"Not well, not at all well, I am grieved to say. Mr. Moss, my heart is almost broken." He turned aside with a little sob.

"No, no, no!" exclaimed Mr. Moss. "That will never do, Cohen. Look on the best side. Things will right themselves; they will, mark my words. I am here to set them right. What is this? An envelope addressed to me?"

"I was writing you a letter when your telegram arrived."

"And then you did not stop to finish it?"

"I did finish it, Mr. Moss, in case you did not come."

"May I read it?"

"Yes; it will explain matters; you will learn from it what it would pain me to tell you in any other way."

"Smoke a cigar while I read."

Aaron took the cigar and laid it aside, and then Mr. Moss, who had taken off his thick coat, sat down and perused the letter.

"I have come in the nick of time, Cohen," he said—"in the nick of time. There is a silver lining to every cloud. I have brought it with me."

"I felt," said Aaron, his hopes rising, "that you could not be the bearer of bad news."

"Not likely, friend Cohen—not likely. I am the bearer of good news, of the best of news. Don't be led away; it isn't a legacy—no, no, it isn't a legacy,

but something almost as good, and I hope you will not throw away the chance."

"If it is anything that will relieve me from my terrible embarrassments it is not likely that I shall throw it away."

"It will do that for a certainty, and there is money attaching to it which I have in my pocket, and which you can have this very night."

"How can I thank you—how can I thank you?"

"Don't try to, and don't be surprised at what you hear. It is a strange piece of business, and I should have refused to undertake it if I had not said to myself, 'This will suit my friend Cohen; it will lift him out of his trouble.' But, upon my word, now that I'm here I don't know how to commence. I never met with anything like it in all my life, and if you were well off you would be the last man in the world I should have dreamed of coming to. But you are not well off, Cohen; you have lost everything; Rachel is ill, and the doctor says she must be taken out of this cold and dismal climate to a place where she can see the sun, and where the air is mild and warm. I dare say you're thinking, 'Moss is speaking in a strange way'; and so I am; but it's nothing to what I've got to tell you. Cohen, what will happen if you can't afford to do as the doctor advises you?"

"Do not ask me," groaned Aaron. "I dare not think of it—I dare not, I dare not!"

"I don't say it unkindly, Cohen, but it seems to be a matter of life and death." Aaron clasped his forehead. "Very well, then; and don't forget that it is in your own hands. Before I commence I must say a

word about myself. I can't do all you ask me in this letter; as I'm a living man I should be glad to assist you, but I have entered into a large speculation which has taken all my spare cash, and the most I could afford would be eight or ten pounds. How long would that last you? In two or three weeks it would be gone, and you would be no better off than you were before; and as to taking Rachel to the south of France, that would be quite out of the question."

"But you held out hope to me," said the trembling Aaron; "you said you were the bearer of good news."

"I said what is true, Cohen, but it is not my money that I have to deal with. I have brought fifty pounds with me, another man's money, intrusted to me for special purposes, and which you can have at once if you will undertake a certain task and accept a certain responsibility. It is only out of my friendship for you; it is only because I know you to be so badly off that you hardly know which way to turn; it is only because Rachel is ill, and requires what you can't afford to pay for, that it entered my mind to offer you the chance."

"Fifty pounds would be the saving of me, Mr. Moss," said Aaron in an agony of suspense. "It would restore my Rachel to health, it would bring happiness into my life. Surely Heaven has directed you to come to my assistance."

"You shall judge for yourself. Listen patiently to what I am going to tell you; it will startle you, but don't decide hastily or rashly. And bear in mind that what passes between us is not to be disclosed to another person on earth."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE TEMPTATION.

MR. MOSS then proceeded to unfold the nature of the mission he had undertaken for Mr. Gordon, with the particulars of which the reader has been made acquainted through the earlier chapters of this story. Aaron listened with attention and surprise, with attention because of his anxiety to ascertain whether the proposal was likely to extricate him from his cruel position, with surprise because the wildest stretch of his imagination would not have enabled him to guess the purport of the singular disclosure. When Mr. Moss ceased speaking the afflicted man rose and paced the room in distress and disappointment.

"I told you I should startle you," said Mr. Moss with a shrewd observance of his friend's demeanor, and for the good of that friend preparing for a battle. "What do you say to it?"

"It is impossible—impossible!" muttered Aaron.

"I told you also," continued Mr. Moss calmly, "not to decide hastily or rashly. In the way of ordinary business I should not, as I have said, have dreamed of coming to you, and I should not have undertaken the mission. But the position in which you are placed is not ordinary, and you are bound to consider the matter, *not upon its merits alone, but in relation to your*

circumstances. I need not say that I shall make nothing out of it myself."

"Indeed, you need not," said Aaron, pressing Mr. Moss' hand. "Pure friendship has brought you here—I know, I know; but surely you must see that it is impossible for me to undertake the responsibility."

"I see nothing of the kind. Honestly and truly, Cohen, I look upon it as a windfall, and if you turn your back upon it you will repent it all your life. What is it I urge you to do? A crime?"

"No, no, I do not say that. Heaven forbid!"

"You are naturally startled and agitated. Cohen, you are a man of intelligence and discernment. My wife has often said, 'If Mr. Cohen was a rich man he would be one of the heads of our people.' She is right; she always is. But there are times when a man cannot exercise his judgment, when he is so upset that his mind gets off the balance. It has happened to me, and I have said afterward, 'Moss, you are a fool'; it happens to all of us. Let me put the matter clearly before you. Have you ever been in such trouble as you are in now?"

"Never in my life."

"Misfortune after misfortune has fallen upon you. All your money is gone; everything is gone; you can't get through this week without assistance. You have tried all your friends, and they cannot help you; you have tried me, and I can only offer you what will meet the necessities of the next few days. It is known that you are badly off, and you cannot get credit; if you could it would cut you to the soul, because you know you would be owing people money that there was no

expectation of your being able to pay. You would be ashamed to look people in the face; you would lose your sense of self-respect, and every fresh step you took would be a step down instead of up. Poor Rachel is lying sick almost to death; she has a stronger claim than ever upon your love, upon your wisdom. The doctor has told you what she requires, and of the possible consequences if you are unable to carry out his directions. Cohen, not one of these things must be lost sight of in the answer you give to what I propose."

Great beads of perspiration were on Aaron's forehead as he murmured, "I do not lose sight of them. They are like daggers in my heart."

"Strangely and unexpectedly," pursued Mr. Moss, "a chance offers itself that will extricate you out of all your difficulties. You will not only receive immediately a large sum of money, but you will be in receipt of a hundred a year, sufficient to keep your family in a moderate way. What are you asked to do in return for this good fortune? To take care of an innocent child who has no one to look after her, who will never be claimed, and about whom you will never be troubled. You can engage a servant to attend to her, and when you explain everything to Rachel she will approve of what you have done. Before I came to you I consulted a gentleman—Dr. Spenlove—who has a kind heart and correct principles, and agreed with me that the transaction was perfectly honorable. I have no doubt of it myself, or I should not be here. Be persuaded, Cohen; it will be a benevolent as well as a wise act, and all your difficulties will be at an end. *What is it Shakspeare says?* 'There is a tide in the

affairs of men which, taken at the flood,'—you know the rest. Why, there are thousands who would jump at the opportunity. Come, now, for Rachel's sake?" Mr. Moss was genuinely sincere in his advice, and he spoke with earnestness and feeling.

"The child is a girl, Mr. Moss?"

"A dear little girl, of the same age as your own."

"Hush! You forget. This little stranger is born of Christian parents."

"That is no crime, Cohen."

"Do I say it is? But we are Jews. The stipulation is that she should be brought up as one of our family, and indeed it could scarcely be otherwise. She would live her life in a Jewish household. It is that I am thinking of. Mr. Moss, I am at war with my conscience."

"She will be none the worse off for living with you and Rachel. Your character is well known, and Rachel is the soul of kindness. You would be committing no sin, Cohen."

"I am not so sure."

"Then who is to know? You and Rachel are alone, and when she is able to be moved you will take her for a time to another place. You need not return here. Rachel's health restored, you should go to London or Liverpool or Manchester, where your talents would have a larger field. I always thought it wrong for you to bury yourself in so small a town as this. There is no scope for you in it; you would never make your fortune here."

"If I go from this place I shall not return to it. You ask who is to know, Mr. Moss. God would know;



Rachel and I would know. How can I reconcile it with my conscience to bring up a child in a faith in which she is not born? It would weigh heavily upon me."

"That is because your views are so strict. I do not see why it should weigh heavily upon you. If it were a boy I should not press it upon you; but girls are different. There is very little for them to learn. To pray—there is only one God. To be good and virtuous—there is only one code of morality. You know that well enough."

"I do know it, but still I cannot reconcile it with my conscience."

"In your position," continued Mr. Moss, perceiving that Aaron was wavering, "I should not hesitate; I should thank God that such a chance fell in my way. Even as it is, if I did not have eleven children, and expecting the twelfth, I would take this lamb into my fold—I would, indeed, Cohen. But my hands are full. Cohen, let me imagine a case. It is a cold and bitter night, and the world is filled with poor struggling creatures, with little children who are being brought up the wrong way. Rachel is asleep upstairs. You are here alone. Suddenly you hear a cry in the street, the cry of a babe. You go to the door, and upon the step you see an infant lying, unsheltered, without a protector. What would you do?"

"I should bring it into my house."

"With pity in your heart, Cohen."

"I hope so. With pity in my heart."

"Poor as you are, you would share what you have with the deserted babe; you would nourish it, you

would cherish it. You would say to Rachel, 'I heard a cry outside the house on this bitter night, and upon the doorstep I discovered this poor babe; I brought it in, and gave it shelter.' What would Rachel answer?"

"She is a tender-hearted woman; she would answer that I did what was right."

"Look upon it in that light, and I will continue the case. In the child's clothes you find a fifty-pound note, and a letter, unsigned, to the effect that the little one has no protector, is alone in the world, and beseeching you to take charge of it and save it from destitution and degradation. No scruples as to the child being a Christian would disturb you then; you would act as humanity dictated. In the case I have imagined you would not be at war with your conscience; why should you be at war with it now?"

"Still I must reflect; and I have a question or two to ask. The name of the mother?"

"Not to be divulged."

"The name of the father?"

"The same answer. Indeed, I do not know it myself."

"Where is the child?"

"At the Salutation Hotel, in the charge of a woman I brought with me."

"My decision must be made to-night?"

"To-night."

"Supposing it to be in the affirmative, what position do you occupy in the matter in the future?"

"None whatever. The task undertook executed, I retire, and have nothing further to do with it. Anything you choose to communicate with me would be

entirely at your discretion. Voluntarily I should never make reference to it."

"What has passed between us, you informed me, is not to be disclosed to any other person?"

"To no other person whatever."

"Am I to understand that it has been disclosed to no other?"

"You are. Only Dr. Spenlove and the gentleman who intrusted me with the commission have any knowledge of it."

"How about the woman who is now taking care of the child at the Salutation Hotel?"

"She is in entire ignorance of the whole proceeding."

"Is she not aware that you have come to my house?"

"She is not. In the event of your deciding to undertake the charge I myself will bring the child here."

"Is the mother to be made acquainted with my name?"

"It is an express stipulation that she is to be kept in ignorance of it."

"And to this she consented willingly?"

"Willingly, for her child's good and her own."

"Is Dr. Spenlove to be made acquainted with it?"

"He is not."

"And the gentleman whose commission you are executing?"

"Neither is he to know. It is his own wish."

"The liberal allowance for the rearing of the child: by whom will it be paid?"

"By a firm of eminent London lawyers whose name and address I will give you, and to whom I shall communicate by telegram to-night. All the future busi-

ness will be solely between you and them without interference from any living being."

"Mr. Moss, I thank you; you have performed the office of a friend."

"It was my desire, Cohen. Then you consent?"

"No. I must have time for reflection. In an hour from now you shall have my answer."

"Don't throw away the chance," said Mr. Moss very earnestly. "Remember, it is for Rachel's sake."

"I will remember it; but I must commune with myself. If before one hour has passed you do not see me at the Salutation Hotel you will understand that I refuse."

"What will you do then, Cohen? How will you manage?"

"God knows. Perhaps he will direct me."

Mr. Moss considered a moment, then took ten five pound bank-notes from his pocket, and laid them on the table.

"I will leave this money with you," he said.

"No, no!" cried Aaron.

"Why not? It will do no harm. You are to be trusted, Cohen. In case you refuse I will take it back. If you do not come for me I will come for you, so I will not wish you good-night. Don't trouble to come to the door; I can find my way out."

Aaron was alone, fully conscious that this hour was, perhaps, the most momentous in his life. The money was before him, and he could not keep his eyes from it. It meant so much! It seemed to speak to him, to say, "Life or death to your beloved wife. Reject me, and you know what will follow." All his efforts to

bring himself to a calm reflection of the position were unavailing. He could not reason, he could not argue with himself. The question to be answered was not whether it would be right to take a child born of Christian parents into his house, to bring her up as one of a Jewish family, but whether his dear wife was to live or die. And he was the judge, and if he bade his friend take the money back he would be the executioner. Of what value then would life be to him? Devout and full of faith as he was, he still, in this dread crisis, was of the earth earthy. His heart was torn with love's agony.

The means of redemption were within his reach. Why should he not avail himself of them?

Rachel enjoyed life for the pleasure it gave her; stricken with blindness as she was, he knew that she would still enjoy it, and that she would shed comfort and happiness upon all who came in contact with her. Was it for him to snap the cord, to say, "You shall no longer enjoy; you shall no longer bestow happiness upon others; you shall no longer live to lighten the trouble of many suffering mortals, to shed light and sweetness in many homes"? Was this the way to prove his love for her? No, he would not shut the door of earthly salvation which had been so providentially opened to him; he would not pronounce a sentence of death against the dear woman he had sworn to love and cherish.

Aaron was not aware that in the view he was taking he was calling to his aid only these personal and sympathetic affections which bound him and Rachel together and that out of a common, human selfishness

he was thrusting from the scale the purely moral and religious obligations which usually played so large a part in his conduct of life. In this dark hour love was supreme and held him in its thrall; in this dark hour he was intensely and completely human; in this dark hour the soft breathing of a feeble woman was more potent than the sound of angels' trumpets from the Throne of Grace, the sight of a white, worn face more powerful than that of a flaming sword of justice in the skies.

He had arrived at a decision; he would receive the child of strangers into his home.

Before going to the Salutation Hotel to make the announcement to Mr. Moss he would see that his wife was sleeping, and not likely to awake during his brief absence from the house. The doctor had assured him that she would sleep for twelve hours, and he had full confidence in the assurance; but he must look upon her face once more before he left her even for a few minutes.

He stood at her bedside; she was sleeping peacefully and soundly; her countenance was now calm and untroubled, and Aaron believed that he saw in it an indication of returning health. Certainly the rest she was enjoying was doing her good. He stooped and kissed her, and she did not stir; her sweet breath fanned his cheeks. Then he turned his eyes upon his child. And as he gazed upon the infant in its white dress a terror for which there is no name stole into his heart. Why was the babe so still and white? Like a marble statue she lay, bereft of life and motion. He put his ear to her lips—not a breath escaped them; he

laid his hand upon her heart—not the faintest f  
of a pulse was there. With feverish haste he  
the little hand, the head, the body, and for al  
response he received he might have been handli  
image of stone. Gradually the truth forced  
upon him. The young soul had gone to its M  
His child was dead!

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

"If our child lives there is hope that my wife will live?"

"A strong hope; I speak with confidence."

"And if our child dies?"

"The mother will die."

No voice was speaking in the chamber of death, but Aaron heard again these words which had passed between the doctor and himself. If the child lived the mother would live; if the child died the mother would die.

A black darkness fell upon his soul. His mind, his soul, every principle of his being, was engulfed in the one despairing thought that Rachel was doomed, that although she was sleeping peacefully before his eyes, death would be her portion when she awoke to the fact that her babe had been taken from her.

"If when she wakes all is well with the child all will be well with her."

The spiritual echo of the doctor's words, uttered but a few hours ago. He heard them as clearly as he had heard the others.

How to avert the threatened doom? How to save his Rachel's life? Prayer would not avail, or he would have flown to it instinctively. It was not that he



asked himself the question, or that in his agony he doubted or believed in the efficacy of prayer. It may be, indeed, that he evaded it, for already a strange and terrible temptation was invading the fortress of his soul. To save the life of his beloved was he ready to commit a sin? What was the true interpretation of sin? A perpetrated act which would benefit one human being to the injury of another. Then if an act were perpetrated which would insure the happiness and well-doing not of one human creature but of three, and would inflict injury upon no living soul, that act was not a sin. Unmistakably not a sin. But if this were really so, wherefore the necessity for impressing it upon himself? The conviction that he was acting justly in this hour of woe—that the contemplated act was not open to doubt in a moral or religious sense—was in itself sufficient. Wherefore, then, the iteration that it was not a sin?

He could not think the matter out in the presence of Rachel and of his dead child. He stole down to his room, and gave himself up to reflection. He turned down the gas almost to vanishing point, and stood in the dark, now thinking in silence, now uttering his thoughts aloud.

A friend had come to him and begged him to receive into his household a babe, a girl, of the same age as his own babe lying dead in the room above. She was deserted, friendless, alone. All natural claims had been abandoned, and the infant was thrown upon the world, without parents, without kith or kin. Even while he believed his own child to be alive he had decided to accept the trust. Why should he hesitate now that

his child was dead? It was almost like a miraculous interposition, or so he chose to present it to himself.

"Even as we spoke together," he said aloud, "my child had passed away. Even as I hesitated the messenger was urging me to accept the trust. It was as if an angel had presented himself, and said, 'The life of your beloved hangs upon the life of a babe, and the Eternal has called her child to him. Here is another to take her place. The mother will not know; she is blind, and has never seen the face of her babe, has scarcely heard its voice. To-morrow she lives or dies—it is the critical day in her existence—and whether she lives or dies rests with you, and with you alone. Science is powerless to help her in the hour of her trial; love alone will lift her into life, into joy, into happiness; and upon you lies the responsibility. It is for you to pronounce the sentence—life or death for your beloved, life or death for a good woman who, if you do not harden your heart, will shed peace and blessings upon all around her. Embrace the gift that God has offered you. Allow no small scruples to drive you from the duty of love.' Yes," cried Aaron in a louder tone, "it was as if an angel spoke. Rachel shall live."

If there was sophistry in this reasoning he did not see it; but the still, small voice whispered:

"It is a deception you are about to practice. You are about to place in your wife's arms a child that is not of her blood or yours. You are about to take a Christian babe to your heart, to rear and instruct her as if she were born in the old and sacred faith that has survived long centuries of suffering and oppression. Can you justify it?"

"Love justifies it," he answered. "The good that will spring from it justifies it. A sweet and ennobling life will be saved. My own life will be made the better for it, for without my beloved I should be lost, I should be lost!"

Again the voice: "It is of yourself you are thinking."

"And if I am?" he answered. "If our lives are so interwoven that one would be useless and broken without the other, where is the sin?"

Again the voice: "Ah, the sin! You have pronounced the word. Remember, it is a sin of commission."

"I know it," he said, "and I can justify it—and if need arise I can atone for it in the future. The child will be reared in a virtuous home, and will have a good woman for a mother. With such an example before her she cannot fail to grow into a bright and useful womanhood. I pluck her from the doubtful possibilities which might otherwise attend her; no word of reproach will ever reach her ears; she will live in ignorance of the sad circumstances of her birth. Is all this nothing? Will it not weigh in the balance?"

Again the voice: "It is much, and the child is fortunate to fall into the hands of such protectors. But, I repeat, in using these arguments you are not thinking of the child; you think only of yourself."

"It is not so," he said; "not alone of myself am I thinking. I am the arbiter of my wife's earthly destiny. Having the opportunity of rescuing her from death, what would my future life be if I stand idly by and see her die before my eyes? Do you ask of me that I shall be her executioner? The heart of the

Eternal is filled with love; he bestows upon us the gift of love as our divinest consolation. He has bestowed it upon me in its sweetest form. Shall I lightly throw away the gift and do a double wrong—to the child that needs a home, to the woman whose fate is in my hands? Afflict me no longer; I am resolved, and am doing what I believe to be right in the sight of the Most High."

The voice was silent and spake no more.

Aaron turned up the gas, gathered the money which Mr. Moss had left upon the table, and quietly left the house. As he approached the Salutation Hotel, which was situated at but a short distance, he saw the light of Mr. Moss' cigar in the street. That gentleman was walking to and fro, anxiously awaiting the arrival of his friend.

"You are here, Cohen," he cried, "and the hour has barely passed! In order that absolute secrecy should be preserved I thought it best to wait outside for you. You have decided?"

"I have decided," said Aaron; "I will receive the child."

"Good, good, good," said Mr. Moss, his eyes beaming with satisfaction. "You are acting like a sensible man, and you have lifted yourself out of your difficulties. I cannot tell you how glad you make me, for I take a real interest in you, a real interest. Remain here; I will bring the babe, and we will walk together to your house. It is well wrapped up, and we will walk quickly, to protect it from the night air. I shall not be a minute."

He darted into the hotel, and soon returned, with

the babe in his arms. Upon Aaron's offering to take the child from him he said gayly :

"No, no, Cohen ; I am more used to carrying babies than you. When you have a dozen of them, like me, I will admit that we are equal ; but not till then, not till then."

Although his joyous tones jarred upon Aaron, he made no remark, and they proceeded to Aaron's house, Mr. Moss being the loquacious one on the road.

"The woman I brought with me does not know, does not suspect, where the child is going to, so we are safe. She goes back to Portsmouth to-night ; I shall remain till the morning. The baby is fast asleep. What would the world be without children ? Did you ever think of that, Cohen ? It would not be worth living in. A home without children—I cannot imagine it. When I see a childless woman I pity her from my heart. They try to make up for it with a cat or a dog, but it's a poor substitute, a poor substitute. If I had no children I would adopt one or two—yes, indeed. There is a happy future before this child ; if she but knew, if she could speak, her voice would ring out a song of praise."

When they arrived at the house Aaron left Mr. Moss in the room below, and ran up to ascertain if Rachel had been disturbed. She had not moved since he last quitted the room, and an expression of profound peace was settling on her face. His own child lay white and still ; a heavy sigh escaped him as he gazed upon the inanimate tiny form. He closed the door softly, and rejoined his friend.

"*I will not stay with you, Cohen,*" said Mr. Moss ;

"you will have enough to do. To-morrow you must get a woman to assist in the house. You have the fifty pounds safe?"

Aaron nodded.

"I have some more money to give you, twenty-five pounds, three months' payment in advance of the allowance to be made to you for the rearing of the child. Here it is, and here, also, is the address of the London lawyers, who will remit to you regularly at the commencement of every quarter. I shall not leave Gosport till eleven in the morning, and if you have anything to say to me I shall be at the Salutation till that hour. Good-night, Cohen; I wish you happiness and good fortune."

Alone with the babe, who lay on the sofa, which had been drawn up to the fire, Aaron stood face to face with the solemn responsibility he had taken upon himself, and with the still more solemn deception to which he was pledged. For a while he hardly dared to uncover the face of the sleeping child, but time was precious, and he nerved himself to the necessity. He sat on the sofa, and gently removed the wrappings which had protected the child from the cold night, but had not impeded its powers of respiration.

A feeling of awe stole upon him; the child he was gazing on might have been his own dead child, so startling was the resemblance between them. There was a little hair upon the pretty head, as there was upon the head of his dead babe; it was dark, as hers was; there was a singular resemblance in the features of the children; the limbs, the feet, the little baby hands, the pouting mouth, might have been cast in

the same mold. The subtle instinct of a mother's love would have enabled her to know instinctively which of the two was her own babe, but it would be necessary for that mother to be blessed with sight before she could arrive at her unerring conclusion. A father could be easily deceived, and the tender age of the children would have been an important—perhaps the chief—factor in doubt. "Surely," Aaron thought as he contemplated the sleeping babe, "this is a sign that I am acting rightly." Men less devout than he might have regarded it as a divine interposition.

The next hour was occupied in necessary details which had not hitherto occurred to him. The clothing of the children had to be exchanged. It was done; the dead was arrayed as the living, the living as the dead. Mere words are powerless to express Aaron's feelings as he performed this task, and when he placed the living, breathing babe in the bed in which Rachel lay, and took his own dead child to an adjoining room and laid it in his own bed, scalding tears ran down his cheeks. "God forgive me, God forgive me!" he murmured again and again. He knelt by Rachel's bed and buried his face in his hands. He had committed himself to the deception; there was no retreat now. For weal or woe the deed was done.

And there was so much yet to do—so much that he had not thought of! Each false step he was taking was leading to another as false as that which preceded it. But if the end justified the means—if he did not betray himself—if Rachel, awaking, suspected nothing, and heard the voice of the babe by her side, without suspecting that it was not her own, why, then, all

would be well! And all through his life, to his last hour, he would endeavor to make atonement for his sin. He inwardly acknowledged it now, without attempting to gloss it over. It *was* a sin; though good would spring from it, though a blessing might attend it, the act was sinful.

His painful musings were arrested by a knock at the street door. With a guilty start he rose to his feet and gazed around with fear in his eyes. What did the knock portend? Was it in some dread way connected with his doings? The thought was harrowing. But presently he straightened himself, set his lips firmly, and went downstairs to attend to the summons.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### PLUCKED FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH.

MR. MOSS stood at the street door, bearing in his arms the little iron safe which Dr. Spenlove, at the intercession of the mother who had consented to part with her child, had intrusted to him.

"In my excitement, Cohen," he commenced before Aaron could speak, "something slipped my memory when we were talking together. I rapped softly at first, fearing to disturb Rachel, but no one answering, I had to use the knocker. I hope I have not disturbed her."

"She is sleeping peacefully," replied Aaron, "and is taking a turn for the better, I am thankful to say. To-morrow, I trust, all danger will be over. Come in."

He closed the door gently, and they entered the parlor.

"I have come back about this little safe," said Mr. Moss, depositing it on the table; "it belongs to the task I undertook. The mother of the babe made it a stipulation that whoever had the care of the child should receive the safe, and hold it in trust for her until she claimed it."

"But I understood," said Aaron in apprehension, "that the mother had no intention of claiming her child."

"In a certain sense that is a fact. Don't look worried; there is no fear of any trouble in the future; only she made it a condition that the safe should go with the child, and that, when the girl was twenty-one years of age, it should be given to her in case the mother did not make her appearance and claim the property. It stands this way, Cohen: The mother took into consideration the chance that the gentleman she is marrying may die before her, in which event she stipulated that she should be free to seek her child. That is reasonable, is it not?"

"Quite reasonable."

"And natural?"

"Quite natural. But I should have been informed of it."

"It escaped me—it really escaped me, Cohen; and what difference can it make? It is only a mother's fancy."

"Yes, only a mother's fancy."

"I'll lay a thousand to one you never hear anything more about it. Put the box away, and don't give it another thought."

Aaron lifted it from the table.

"It is heavy, Mr. Moss."

"Yes, it is heavy."

"Do you know what it contains?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"It must be something that the mother sets store on—jewels, perhaps."

"Nothing more unlikely. The poor woman didn't have a shilling to bless herself with. I shouldn't trouble about it if I were you."

"I have gone too far," said Aaron, sighing; "I cannot retreat."

"It would be madness to dream of such a thing. Remember what depends upon it. Cohen, in case anything occurs I think I ought to tell you what has been passing in my mind."

"In case anything occurs!" repeated Aaron in a hollow tone, and with a startled look.

"The poor child," continued Mr. Moss, "has had a hard time of it. We almost dug her out of the snow last night; the exposure was enough to kill an infant of tender years, and there's no saying what effect it may have upon her. If it had been a child of my own I should be alarmed for the consequences, and I should scarcely expect her to live through it." Aaron gasped. "The idea distresses you, but we must always take the human view. Should she not survive no one can be blamed for it. How is your own dear little girl?"

"She is well," replied Aaron mechanically. He passed his hand across his eyes despairingly.

"Good-night again," said Mr. Moss. "I have sent my telegram to the London lawyers. Don't forget that I shall be at the Salutation till eleven in the morning."

It was not only the incident of the iron safe that Mr. Moss in the first instance had omitted to impart to Aaron. In the agreement formulated by Mr. Gordon there was an undertaking that in the event of the child's death, or of her marriage if she grew to womanhood, the lawyers were to pay the sum of five hundred pounds to the person into whose home the child was received. Mr. Moss had not mentioned this, and

Aaron was in consequence ignorant of the fact. Had he been aware of it, is it likely that he would have shrunk from carrying out the scheme inspired by his agony? It is hard to say. During these pregnant and eventful hours he was dominated by the one overpowering passionate desire to save the life of his beloved; during these hours all that was highest and noblest in his nature was deadened by human love.

There was no rest for him on this night; he did not dare to undress and seek repose. The moments were too precious; some action had to be taken, and to be taken soon, and, his mind torn with agony and remorse, he devoted himself to the consideration of it. In the course of this mental debate he was plunged at times into the lowest depths of self-abasement, but the strength of his character and the serious issues at stake lifted him out of these depths. Ever and anon he crept into Rachel's room, and derived consolation from the calm sleep she was enjoying. The doctor's prognostications of returning health seemed to be on the point of realization; when she awoke in the morning and clasped her child to her bosom, and heard its sweet voice, all would be well with her. What need, then, for further justification?

But his further action must be decided upon and carried out before Rachel awoke. And it was imperative that she should be kept in ignorance of what had taken place. On no account must it be revealed to her that he had taken a strange child into the house, and that it had died there within a few hours. In her delicate state the news might be fatal.

Gradually all that it was necessary for him to do

unfolded itself, and was mentally arranged in consecutive order. He waited till three o'clock, and then he went from his house to the Salutation Hotel. The night porter, half asleep, was in attendance, and after some demur he conducted Aaron to Mr. Moss' sleeping apartment.

"Who is there?" cried Mr. Moss, aroused by the knocking at his door.

"It is I," replied Aaron. "I must speak to you at once."

Mr. Moss jumped from bed.

"Is it all right, sir?" asked the night porter.

"Of course it is all right," said Mr. Moss, opening the door, and admitting his visitor.

The night porter returned to his duties, and fell into a doze.

"What brings you here at this time of night?" exclaimed Mr. Moss, and then, seeing the distress in Aaron's face, "Good God! It is not about Rachel?"

"No, it is not about Rachel; it is bad enough, but not so bad as that. How shall I tell you—how shall I tell you?"

"Stop a moment," said Mr. Moss. "I ordered half a bottle of port before I went out, and there is a glass or two left. Drink this."

The wine gave Aaron courage to proceed with his task.

"I have dreadful news to tell you," he said, putting down the glass.

"I guess it," interrupted Mr. Moss. "The child!"

"Yes," answered Aaron, with averted eyes, "the child."

"Is she very ill?"

"Mr. Moss, the child is dead."

"Heavens!" cried Mr. Moss, slipping into his clothes as fast as he could. "What a calamity! But at the same time, Cohen, what a release! Tell me all about it. Does Rachel know?"

"Rachel does not know. She is still sleeping, and she must not know. It would kill her—it would kill her!"

"I see the necessity, Cohen; it must be kept from her, and I think I see how it can be managed. It is a fortunate thing that the woman who accompanied me here with the poor child has not returned to Portsmouth, as I bade her. She met with some friends in Gosport, who persuaded her to stop the night, and she was going back with me in the morning. I promised to call for her, but she will have to remain here now till the child is buried. She will not mind, because it will be something in her pocket. A sad ending, Cohen, a sad ending, but I feared it. Did I not prophesy it? What else was to be expected after last night's adventure? But you have not told me how it occurred."

"It was very simple," said Aaron in a low tone. "I laid the child in my own bed, intending to call in a woman as soon after daylight as possible to attend it till Rachel was well and able to get about. She seemed to be asleep, and was in no pain. I determined not to go to bed, but to keep up all night, to attend to the little one, and to Rachel and my own child. Bear with me, Mr. Moss, I am unstrung."

"No wonder. Take time, Cohen, take time."

"Now and again I went to look at the child, and

observed nothing to alarm me. An hour ago I closed my eyes, and must have slept; I was tired out. When I awoke I went upstairs, and was startled by a strange stillness in the child. I lifted her in my arms. Mr. Moss, she was dead. I came to you at once to advise me what to do. You must help me, Mr. Moss; my dear Rachel's life hangs upon it. You know how sensitive she is; and the doctor has warned me that a sudden shock might be fatal."

"I will help you, Cohen, of course I will help you; it is my duty, because it is I who have brought this trouble upon you. But I did it with the best intentions. I see a way out of the difficulty. The woman I employed—how fortunate, how fortunate that she is still here!—is a godsend to us. She is a kind-hearted creature, and she will be sorry to hear of the child's death, but at the same time she is poor and will be glad to earn a sovereign. A doctor must see the child, to testify that she died a natural death. She must have passed away in her sleep."

"She did. Is it necessary that the doctor should visit my house in order to see the child?"

"Not at all. I have everything planned in my mind. Now I am ready to go out. First, to the telegraph office—it is open all night here—to dispatch a telegram to the London lawyers to send a representative down immediately, who, when he comes, will take the affair out of our hands, I expect. Afterward to the house of the woman's friends; she must accompany us to your house, and we will take the child away before daylight. Then we will call in a doctor, and nothing need reach Rachel's ears. Don't take it to

heart, Cohen; you have troubles enough of your own. The news you give me of Rachel is the best of news. Joy and sorrow, Cohen—how close they are together!"

In the telegraph office Mr. Moss wrote a long message to Mr. Gordon's lawyers, impressing upon them the necessity of sending a representative without delay to take charge of the body, and to attend to the funeral arrangements.

"Between ourselves, Cohen," he said as they walked to the house of the woman's friends, "the lawyers will be rather glad of the news than otherwise; and so will Mr. Gordon when it reaches him. It clears the way for him, in a manner of speaking. I am not sure whether I made the matter clear to you, but there is no doubt whatever that, so far as Mr. Gordon is concerned, the child was an encumbrance—to say nothing of the expense, which perhaps he would not have minded, being almost a millionaire. But still, as it has turned out, he has got rid of a difficulty, and he will not be sorry when he hears of it."

"And the mother," said Aaron—"how will she take it?"

"That is another matter, and I will not pretend to say. There are mothers and mothers, and fathers and fathers. We know, Cohen, what we think of our own children, but there are people in the world with different ideas from ours. The mother of this little one will feel grieved at first, no doubt, but she will soon get over it. Then, perhaps, her husband will not tell her. Here we are at the woman's house."

They halted before a small cottage, evidently inhab-



ited by people in humble circumstances. Before he aroused the inmates Mr. Moss said :

"I shall keep your name out of the affair, Cohen, but to a certain extent the woman must be taken into our confidence. Secrecy will be imposed upon her, and she will be paid for it. Remain in the background; I will speak to her alone."

The woman herself came to the door, and when she was dressed Mr. Moss had a conversation with her, the result of which was that she and the two men walked to Aaron's house, where she took charge of the dead child, and carried it to the cottage. Then she went for a doctor—to Aaron's relief not the doctor who attended his wife—and as there was no doubt that the child had died a natural death, a certificate to that effect was given. At six in the morning Aaron returned to Rachel, and sitting by her bedside, waited for her awakening. The potion she had taken was to insure sleep for twelve hours; in two hours he would hear her voice; in two hours she would be caressing a babe to which she had not given birth.

It seemed to Aaron as though months had passed since Mr. Moss had presented himself at his house last night, and for a while it almost seemed as though, in that brief time, it was not himself who had played the principal part in this strange human drama, but another being who had acted for him, and who had made him responsible for an act which was to color all his future life. But he did not permit himself to indulge long in this view of what had transpired; he knew and felt that he, and he alone, was responsible, and that to his dying day he would be accountable for it. Well,

he would bear the burden, and would, by every means within his power, endeavor to atone for it. He would keep strict watch over himself; he would never give way to temptation; he would act justly and honorably; he would check the hasty word; he would make no enemies; he would be kind and considerate to all around him. He did not lay the flattering unction to his soul that in thus sketching his future rule of life he was merely committing himself to that which he had always followed in the past. This one act seemed to cast a shadow over all that had gone before; he had to commence anew.

At eight o'clock Rachel stirred; she raised her arm and put her hand to her eyes, blind to all the world, blind to his sin, blind to everything but love. Then instinctively she drew the babe nearer to her. A faint cooing issued from the infant's lips, and an expression of joy overspread the mother's features. This joy found its reflex in Aaron's heart, but the anxiety under which he labored was not yet dispelled. Was there some suitable instinct in a mother's love which would convey to Rachel's sense the agonizing truth that the child she held in her arms was not her own.

There was no indication of it. She fondled the child, she suckled it, the light of heaven shone in her face.

"Aaron!"

"My beloved!"

"Do you hear our child, our dear one? Ah, what happiness!"

"Thank God!" said Aaron inly. "Oh, God be thanked!"

"Is it early or late, dear love?" asked Rachel. "It is morning, I know, for I see the light; I feel it here"—with her hand pressing the infant's head to her heart.

"It is eight o'clock, beloved," said Aaron.

"I have had a long and beautiful sleep. I do not think I have dreamed, but I have been so happy—so happy! My strength seems to be returning. I have not felt so well since the night of the fire. Our darling seems stronger too; it is because I am so much better. I must think of that; it is a mother's duty to keep well for her child's sake, and, dear husband, for your sake also. I do not love you less because I love our child so dearly."

"I am sure of that, beloved. Should I be jealous of our child? That would be as foolish as it would be unwise."

"You speak more cheerfully, Aaron. Is that because of me?"

"It is because of you, beloved. We both draw life and happiness from you. Therefore get strong soon."

"I shall—I feel I shall. My mind is clear; there is no weight on my heart. Before many days have passed I shall be out of bed, learning my new duties. Aaron, our child will live!"

"She will live to bless and comfort us, beloved."

She passed her hand over his face. "You are crying, Aaron."

"They are tears of joy, Rachel, at seeing you so much better. A terrible fear has weighed me down; it is removed, thanks be to the Eternal! The world was dark till now; I dared not think of the future. Now all is well."

"Am I, indeed, so much to you, dear husband?"

"You are my life. As the sun is to the earth so are you to me."

The wife, the husband, and the child lay in each other's embrace.

"God is good," murmured Rachel. "I did so want to live, for you and for our child! But I feared, I feared; strength seemed to be departing from me. What will they do, I thought, when I am gone? But God has laid his hand upon us and blessed us. Praised be his name forever and ever!"

"Amen, amen! I have not yet said my morning prayers. It is time."

She sank back in bed, and he put on his taleth and phylacteries, and prayed fervently. He did not confine himself to his usual morning devotions, but sought his book for propitiatory supplications for forgiveness for transgression. "Forgive us, oh, our Father! for we have sinned; pardon us, oh, our King! for we have transgressed; for thou art ever ready to pardon and forgive. Blessed art thou, the Eternal, who is gracious and doth abundantly pardon." And while he supplicated forgiveness Rachel lay and sang a song of love.

His prayers ended, Aaron folded his taleth and wound up his phylacteries, and resumed his seat by Rachel's bed.

"While you slept last night, dear love," he said, "a piece of good fortune fell to my share, through our friend, Mr. Moss. I shall be able to take a servant in the house."

"How glad I am!" she answered. "It distressed me

greatly to know that you had everything to attend to yourself. A woman, or a girl, is so necessary!"

"There is altogether a brighter outlook for us, Rachel. Do you think Prissy would do?"

"She is very handy, and very willing. If you could manage until I can get up I could soon teach her."

"I will go, then, and see if she is able to come. You must not mind being alone a little while."

"I shall not be alone, dear," said Rachel, with a bright smile at the child.

He prepared breakfast for her before he left, and she partook of it with a keen appetite. Then he went on his mission, and met Mr. Moss coming to the house.

"I have had a telegram," said that gentleman, "in reply to mine. A gentleman will arrive from London this afternoon to attend to matters. You look brighter."

"Rachel is much better," said Aaron.

"You are in luck all round, Cohen. There are men who always fall on their feet. I'm one of them; you're another. This time yesterday you were in despair; now you're in clover. Upon my word, I am as glad as if it had happened to myself. You know one of our sayings: 'Next to me my wife; next to my wife my child; next to my child my friend.' My good old father told me it was one of the wise sayings of Rabbi ben—I forgot who he was the son of. A friend of ours who used to come to our house said to my father that there was no wisdom and no goodness in the saying, because the rabbi put himself first, as being of more consequence than wife and child and friend. *My father answered, 'You are wrong; there is wisdom,*

there is goodness, there is sense in it. Self is the greatest of earthly kings. Put yourself in one scale, and pile up all the world in the other, and you will weigh it down.' He was right. What comes so close home to us as our own troubles and sorrows?"

"Nothing," said Aaron rather sadly; "they outweigh all the rest. We are all human, and being human, fallible. Can you imagine an instance, Mr. Moss, where love may lead to crime?"

"I can, and what is more, I would undertake to justify it. Who is this little girl?"

The diversion in the conversation was caused by Prissy, who had run to Aaron, and was plucking at his coat.

"A good girl who attends to our Sabbath lights."

"'Ow's missis, please, sir?" inquired Prissy anxiously.

"Much better this morning, thank you."

"And the babby, sir?"

"Also better and stronger, Prissy." Prissy jumped up and down in delight. "I was coming to see you. Do you think your aunt would let you come to us as a regular servant, to live and eat and sleep in the house."

This vision of happiness almost took Prissy's breath away, but she managed to reply, "If yer'd make it worth 'er while she would, Mr. Cohen. She's allus telling me I'm taking the bread out of 'er mouth, and aint worth my salt. Oh, Mr. Cohen, *will* yer take me, *will* yer? I don't care where I sleep, I don't care wot yer give me to eat, I'll work for yer day and night, I will! Auntie makes my life a misery, she does, and

I've lost Wictoria Rejiner, sir. She's got another nuss, and I aint got nobody to care for now. Aunty sed this morning I was a reg'lar pest, and she wished she could sell me at so much a pound."

"You don't weigh a great deal," said Aaron, gazing at Prissy in pity, and then, with a touch of his old humor, "How much a pound do you think she would take?"

"Come and arks 'er, Mr. Cohen, come and arks 'er," cried Prissy, running before Aaron, and looking back imploringly at him.

He and Mr. Moss followed the girl into the presence of Prissy's aunt, and although he did not buy Prissy by the pound weight, he made a bargain with the woman, and by the outlay of five shillings secured the girl's permanent services, it being understood that she was not to take her niece away without Prissy's consent. As they walked back to Aaron's house he spoke to Prissy about wages, but the girl, who felt as if heaven's gates had opened for her to enter, interrupted him by saying:

"Don't talk about wages, sir, please don't. I don't want no wages. Give me a frock and a bone, and I'll work the skin off my fingers for yer, I will!"

Extravagant as were her professions, never was a poor girl more in earnest than Prissy.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE CURTAIN FALLS.

MR. MOSS and Aaron spent the greater part of the day together, awaiting the arrival of Mr. Gordon's legal representative. The doctor who attended Rachel called only once, and gave a good report of her condition.

"The crisis is over," he said to Aaron. "Your wife and child will live. In a few days Mrs. Cohen will be strong enough to be removed, and I advise that you take her away without delay to the south of France, where, before spring, her health will be completely re-established."

It was not until the doctor had departed that the question presented itself to Aaron whether he had any right to the fifty pounds he had received from Mr. Moss. He was clear as to the second sum of twenty-five pounds; that must be returned. He wished Mr. Moss to take it back, but that gentleman would have nothing to do with it; and as to Aaron's right to retain the fifty pounds he entertained no doubt.

"It is undisputably yours," he said; "it was handed to me by Mr. Gordon himself for a specific purpose, and I look upon it as a retaining fee. No lawyer returns such a fee when the case breaks down. Understand, please, Cohen, that I am no longer acting in the affair. It rests now between you and the lawyers."



Late in the afternoon Mr. Moss went to the railway station to meet the lawyer, and the two proceeded together to the house where the dead child lay. Arrangements for the funeral were made, and then Mr. Moss conducted the lawyer, whose name was Chesterman, to Aaron's house.

"Mr. Chesterman has something to say to you, Cohen," he said; "I will leave you together." He took Aaron aside. "It is something of great importance, a wonderful stroke of fortune. Don't throw it away. It will be the making of you—and remember Rachel."

"Mr. Moss," commenced Mr. Chesterman when he and Aaron were alone, "has related to me all that has occurred. In a general sense the death of the child is to be regretted, as would be the death of any person, old or young, but there are peculiar circumstances in this case which render this visitation of God a relief to certain parties. It removes all difficulties from the future, and there is now no likelihood of our client's plans being hampered or interfered with. You are aware that he is a gentleman of fortune."

"I have been so informed."

"You may not be aware, however, that he is a gentleman of very decided views, and that he is not to be turned from any resolution he may have formed. We lawyers have to deal with clients of very different temperaments, and when a case is submitted to us by a strong-minded gentleman we may advise, but we may not waste time in arguing. I understand from Mr. Moss that you have some scruples with respect to the money you have received from him?"

"I wish to know whether I may consider the first

sum of fifty pounds mine; I have my doubts about it. As to the second sum of twenty-five pounds paid in advance for the rearing of the child I have no doubt whatever."

"We have nothing to do with either of those sums; they do not come from us, but independently from our client to Mr. Moss, and from Mr. Moss to you. Without being consulted professionally, I agree with Mr. Moss that the fifty pounds are yours. I offer no opinion upon the second sum."

"If you will give me your client's address I will communicate with him."

"We cannot disclose it to you; it is confided to us professionally, and our instructions are to keep it secret."

"You can give him my name and address."

"No. His stipulation is that it is not to be made known to him. If at any time he asks us voluntarily for it that is another matter, and I will make a note of it. The special purpose of my visit is to complete and carry out to the last letter our client's instructions. The conditions to which he bound himself were very liberal. With a generous desire for the child's welfare in the event of her living and marrying, he placed in our hands the sum of five hundred pounds as a marriage dowry, to be paid over to her on her wedding day."

"A noble-minded gentleman," said Aaron.

Mr. Chesterman smiled. "Different people, different temperaments. In the event of the child's death this five hundred pounds was to be paid over to the party or parties who undertook the charge of her. The child is dead; the five hundred pounds is to be paid over to you."

"But, sir," said Aaron in astonishment, "do you not understand that I cannot accept this money?"

"It is not for us to understand; it is for us to carry out instructions. I have brought the sum with me, and all I have to do is to hand it over to you, and to take your receipt for it. Mr. Moss hinted to me that you might raise objections; my reply was, Nonsense. The money belongs to you by legal and moral right, and I decline to listen to objections. If it is any satisfaction to you I may tell you that our client can well afford to pay it, and that by its early payment he is a considerable gainer, for he is no longer under the obligation to pay a hundred a year for the child's maintenance. Here is the receipt legally drawn out; oblige me by signing it."

It was in vain for Aaron to protest; the lawyer insisted, and at length, fearing the consequences of a decided refusal, Aaron put his name to the paper.

"Our business being concluded," said Mr. Chesterman, rising, "I have the pleasure of wishing you good-day. Should in the future any necessity for the statement arise I shall not hesitate to declare that the child was placed in the care of an honorable gentleman who would have faithfully performed his duty toward her."

"God forgive me," said Aaron when his visitor was gone, "for the sin I have committed! God help me to atone for it!"

But he would have been less than human had he not felt grateful that the means were placed in his hands to restore his beloved wife to health and strength. Before a week had passed he and Rachel and the child, accompanied by Prissy, were travelers to a milder clime.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### AFTER MANY YEARS.

A MAN upon whose face all that is noble and steadfast seems to have set its seal, to give the world assurance that here was one who, had his lot been so cast, would have ruled over men with justice, truth, and honor. He is of a goodly height, and his features are large and clearly defined. A sensitive, resolute mouth, calm, well-proportioned lips, which close without restraint and are eloquent even when the tongue is silent, a nose gently arched, with curved, indented nostrils, a massive forehead, almost oval at the top, and with projecting lower arches, the eyebrows near to the large brown eyes, the chin and cheeks clothed in a handsome beard, in which gray hairs are making themselves manifest. Powerful, benignant, and self-possessed as is his appearance, there is an underlying sadness in his eyes which could be variously construed—as born of a large experience of human ways, and of the errors into which mortals are prone to fall, or, maybe, of an ever-abiding remembrance of one moment in his own life when he also was tempted and fell. But no such thought as the latter ever entered the minds of those who knew him personally and those who judged him by the repute he bore, which could only have been earned by a man who walked unflinchingly and uner-

ringly in the straight path, and was just and merciful to all who came in contact with him. This is Aaron Cohen, now close upon his fiftieth year.

A woman whose tranquil eyes never see the light of day, but in which, nevertheless, there is no sign of repining or regret. Purity and sweetness dwell in her face, and as she stands motionless, in a listening attitude, her white hand resting on the table, no more exquisite representation of peace and universal love and sympathy could be found in living form or marble statue. She is fair almost to whiteness, and although her figure is slight and there is no color in her cheeks, she is in perfect health—only that sometimes during the day she closes her eyes and sleeps in her armchair for a few minutes. In those intervals of unconsciousness, and when she seeks her couch, she sees fairer pictures, perhaps, than if the wonders of the visible world were an open book to her. Her dreams are inspired by a soul of goodness, and her husband's heart, as he gazes upon her in her unconscious hours, is always stirred to prayer and thankfulness that she is by his side to bless his days. Not only in the house is her influence felt. She is indefatigable in her efforts to seek out deserving cases of distress and to relieve them; and she does not confine her charity to those of her faith. In this regard Jew and Christian are alike to her, and not a week passes that she does not plant in some poor home a seed which grows into a flower to gladden and cheer the hearts of the unfortunate and suffering. Grateful eyes follow her movements, and a blessing is shed upon her as she departs. A ministering angel is she, whose words are balm,

whose presence brings sweet life into dark spaces. So might an invisible herald of the Lord walk the earth, healing the sick, lifting up the fallen, laying his hand upon the wounded breast, and whispering to all: "Be comforted. God has heard your prayers, and has sent me to relieve you." This is Rachel Cohen, Aaron's wife, in her forty-fourth year.

A younger woman, in her springtime, with life's fairest pages spread before her. Darker than Rachel is she, with darker hair and eyes and complexion, slim, graceful, and beautiful. It is impossible that she should not have felt the influence of the home in which she has been reared, and that she should not be the better for it, for it is a home in which the domestic affections unceasingly display themselves in their tenderest aspect, in which the purest and most ennobling lessons of life are inculcated by precept and practice; but a profound student of human nature, whose keen insight would enable him to plumb the depths of passion, to detect what lay beneath the surface, to trace the probable course of the psychological inheritance which all parents transmit to their children, would have come to the conclusion that in this fair young creature were instincts and promptings which were likely one day to give forth a discordant note in this abode of peace and love, and to break into rebellion. There is no outward indication of such possible rebellion. To the friends and acquaintances of the household she is a lovely and gracious Jewish maiden, who shall in time become a mother in Judah. This is Ruth Cohen, in the eyes of all the world the daughter of Aaron and Rachel.

A young man, Ruth's junior by a year, with his father's strength of character and his mother's sweetness of disposition. He is, as yet, too young for the full development of this rare combination of qualities, the outcome of which is to be made manifest in the future, but he is not too young to win love and respect. His love for his parents is ardent, his faith in them indelible. To him his mother is a saint, his father a man without blemish. Were he asked to express his most earnest wishes he would answer, "When I am my father's age may I be honored as he is; when I marry may my wife be as my mother is." This is Joseph Cohen, the one other child of Aaron and Rachel.

A tall ungainly woman of thirty, working like a willing slave from morning to night, taking pride and pleasure in the home, and metaphorically prostrating herself before everyone who lives beneath its roof. Esteemed and valued by her master and mistress, for whom she is ready to sacrifice herself, and to undergo any privation; especially watchful of her mistress, and tender toward her; jealous of the good name of those whom she serves with devotion. This is Prissy, the ever true, the ever faithful.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE FOUNDATION OF AARON'S FORTUNE.

EVENTFUL indeed to Aaron Cohen had been the twenty years since he left Gosport. In the south of France, where they remained for a much longer time than he intended, Rachel was restored to health, and Aaron had the joy of seeing her move happily about the house and garden, and of hearing her sing to her baby the songs and lullabys which, from a mother's lips, are so fraught with melodious and tender meaning. It almost seemed as if she had inward cause for thankfulness that blindness had fallen upon her, for Aaron had never known her to be so blithe and light-hearted as during those weeks of returning health. Prissy was invaluable to them, and proved to be a veritable treasure. The short time it took her to learn her duties, the swiftness and eagerness with which they were performed, the delight she took in the babe, who soon replaced Victoria Regina in her affections, and the care and skill with which she guided her mistress' movements, amazed Aaron. He had divined from the first that she was a shrewd, clever girl, and he had the satisfaction of discovering that she was much cleverer than he would have ventured to give her credit for. She was tidier in her dress, too, and never presented herself unless she was clean and neat. She



became, in a sense, her mistress' teacher, and Rachel was so apt a pupil that Aaron's apprehensions that she would meet with an accident if she moved too freely about were soon dispelled.

"Is it not wonderful, love?" she said. "I think I must have eyes at the tips of my fingers. But it is Prissy I have to thank for it."

She repaid the girl, be sure. Gradually Prissy's mode of expressing herself underwent improvement; she did not use so many negatives, she dropped fewer h's, she learned to distinguish between g's and k's, and Aaron himself laid the first stone in her education by teaching her the A B C. One thing Prissy would not learn; she obstinately refused to have anything to do with the French language. She did make a commencement, but when she was told that *chou* (she scornfully turned her back on *du*) was cabbage it was the last straw. "In course we choo," she said; "wot do we put things in our mouth for?" She had previously shied at *pain*, declaring that bread was pleasure. English was good enough for her, she declared, and to the English tongue she nailed her colors. Fond as she was of babies, she would not countenance French babies, and said it was a shame to dress them so. "I'm a troo bloo, sir," she said to Aaron; "please don't force me." And with a hearty laugh he desisted.

He himself spoke French fluently, and to this may be ascribed the first change in his fortunes. Easy in his mind respecting Rachel, easy respecting money, he found himself at leisure to look about him and observe. He made friends, and among them a poor French engineer of great skill. In conversation one

day this engineer mentioned that tenders were invited for the construction of a local bridge. It was not a very important matter; the lake it was to span was of no great dimensions, and the bridge required was by no means formidable.

"There are only two contractors who will tender for it," said the engineer, "and they are in each other's confidence. They will settle privately the amount of their separate tenders, and the lowest will obtain the contract. They will divide the profits between them. If I had a little money to commence with I would tender for the work, and my tender would be at least ten thousand francs below theirs. Then it would be I who would construct the bridge, and public money would be saved."

"What would be your profit?" asked Aaron.

"Twenty thousand francs," was the reply, "perhaps more."

"And the amount of your tender?"

"Eighty thousand francs. I have the plans and specifications, and every detail of expense for material and labor, in my house. Will you come and look over them?"

Aaron examined them, and submitting them to the test of inquiry as to the cost of labor and material, found them to be correct. A simple-minded man might have been taken in by a schemer who had prepared complicated figures for the purpose of trading with another person's money, and standing the chance of losing or winning; but Aaron was not simple-minded, the poor engineer was not a schemer, and the figures were honestly set down.

"It would not need a great amount of money," said the engineer. "If a certain sum were deposited in the bank a further sum could be raised upon the signed contract being given as security, and moreover, as the work proceeds, specified payments will be made by the local authorities."

"How much would be required to commence operations, and to make everything safe?"

"Ten thousand francs."

Roughly, that was four hundred pounds. The five hundred pounds he had received from the lawyers were as yet untouched, for they lived very economically, and they were in a part of the world where thrift was part of the people's education. Aaron believed the project to be safe.

"If I advance it?" he asked.

"We would make it a partnership affair," replied the poor engineer eagerly.

Upon that understanding the bridge was tendered for, and the tender accepted. In four months the work was executed and passed by the inspectors; they received the balance due to them, and a division of the profits was made. After paying all his expenses Aaron was the richer by two hundred pounds. He gave fifty pounds to the poor, which raised him in the estimation of the people among whom he was temporarily sojourning. He had not been idle during the four months occupied by the building of the bridge; under the guidance of his partner he had superintended the workmen and undertaken the correspondence and management of the accounts; and now as these duties were to him he had shown great intelligence and aptitude.

"We met on a fortunate day," said the engineer.

At about this time a new engineering project presented itself. It was on a larger scale than the first, and the two men, emboldened by their success, tendered for it. Again did fortune favor them; everybody, with the exception of rival contractors, was on their side. In the carrying out of their first contract there had not been a hitch; they had paid their workmen better wages, they had behaved honestly and liberally all around, and they had already achieved a reputation. Moreover, people were talking of Rachel's kindness and of Aaron's benevolence. Hats were lifted to them, women and children left flowers at their door; rich was the harvest they gathered for their charity.

When it was known they had obtained another contract the best workmen came to them for employment, and they learned what all employers of labor may learn, that it is wise policy to pay generously for bone and muscle. The hateful political economy of Ricardo, which would grind labor down to starvation pittance, could never find lodgment in the mind of such a man as Aaron Cohen. The new venture was entirely successful, and being of greater magnitude than the first, the profits were larger. Aaron was the possessor of two thousand pounds. He gave two hundred pounds to the poor. He did more than this. The doctor who had attended Rachel in Gosport had declined to accept a fee, and Aaron now wrote him a grateful letter, inclosing in it a draught for a hundred pounds, which he asked the doctor to distribute among the local charities. That the receipt of this money

afforded gratification to the doctor was evidenced in his reply. "Everyone here," he said, "has kind words for you and your estimable wife, and the general feeling is that if you had continued to reside in Gosport it would have been a source of pleasure to all of us. When I speak of your good fortune all the townsfolk say, 'We are glad to hear it.'" Thus did good spring out of evil.

Aaron felt that his foot was on the ladder. He entered into a three years' partnership with his friend the engineer, and they executed many public works, and never had a failure. The justness of their trading, their consideration for the toilers who were helping to build up a fortune for them, the honest wages they paid, earned for them an exceptional reputation for rectitude and fair dealing. In these matters, and in this direction, Aaron was the guiding spirit. He left to his partner the technical working out of their operations, and took himself the control of wages and finance.

Occasionally there were arguments between him and his partner, the latter hinting, perhaps, that there was a cheaper market, and that so much money could be saved by employing such and such middlemen, who offered to supply labor and material at prices that were not equitable from the point of view of the toilers and producers. Aaron would not entertain propositions of this kind.

"We are doing well," he said, "we are making money, we are harvesting. Be satisfied."

His partner gave way; Aaron's character was too strong for resistance.

"Clean and comfortable homes," said Aaron, "a good education for their children, a modest enjoyment of the world's pleasures—these are the laborers' due."

Hearing of this, some large employers called him quixotic and said he was ruining trade, but he pursued the just and even tenor of his way, satisfied that he was a savior and not a spoiler.

Upon the conclusion of each transaction, when the accounts were balanced, he devoted a portion of his profits to benevolent purposes, and he became renowned as a public benefactor. The thanks that were showered upon him did not please him, but tended rather to humiliate and humble him; he would not listen to expressions of gratitude; and it will be presently seen that when he returned to England he took steps to avoid the publicity which was distasteful to him.

Meanwhile Rachel thrived. She walked with an elastic spring in her feet, as though in response to nature's greeting, and joy and happiness accompanied her everywhere. She was profoundly and devoutly grateful for her husband's better fortune, and daily rendered up thanks for it to the Giver of all good. She took pleasure in everything; blind as she was, she enjoyed nature's gifts to the full. In winter it was extraordinary to hear her describe the aspect of woods and fields in their white feathery mantle; with deep-drawn breath she inhaled the fresh cold air, and a glory rested on her face as she trod the snow-clad paths.

When she visited the poor on those cold days Prissy accompanied her, carrying a well-filled basket on her arm. Her sympathy with the sick and suffering was

divine, and in the bleakest hours, when the sky was overcast and the light was hidden from shivering mortals, she was the herald of sunshine. A priest met her on one of these journeys, and gave her good-day.

"Good-day, father," she said.

"You know me!" he exclaimed, surprised.

"I heard your voice a fortnight ago," she replied, "in the cottage I am going to now, and I never forget a voice. After you were gone the poor woman told me you were her priest. I heard so much of you that was beautiful."

She put forth her hand; he hesitated a moment, then took it and pressed it.

"You are a Jewess?"

"Yes, father."

"Let me come and talk to you."

"Yes, father, come and talk to me of your poor, to whom you are so good. You do so much; I, being blind, can do so little. If you will allow me"—she offered him some gold pieces, and he accepted them.

"The Holy Mother have you in her keeping," he said: and went his way.

Dogs and horses were her friends, and looked wistfully for recognition when she was near them. She scattered food for the birds, and they grew to know her; some would even pick crumbs from her hands. "I do not think," she said, "they would trust me so if I were not blind. They know I cannot see, and cannot harm them." Aaron thought differently; not a creature that drew breath could fail to trust and love this sweet woman whom God had spared to him.

Whom God had spared to him! When the thought

thus expressed itself he raised his eyes to heaven in supplication.

She was the first to taste the sweet breath of spring.

"Spring is coming," she said; "the birds are trilling the joyful news. How busy they are over their nests! In a little while we shall see the flowers."

She invariably spoke of things as if she could see them, as doubtless she did with spiritual sight, investing them with a beauty which was not of this world. It was her delight in summer to sit beneath the branches of a favorite cherry tree, and to follow with her ears the gambols of her children. For she had two now.

A year after they left Gosport another child was born to them, Joseph, to whom Aaron gave with intense and passionate love. It was not that he was cold to Ruth, that he was not unremitting in showing her affection, but in his love for his son there was a finer quality of which no one but himself was conscious. He had prayed for another child, and the blessing was bestowed upon him.

In the first flush of his happiness he was tempted to regard this gift of God as a token that his sin was forgiven, but he soon thrust this reflection aside, refusing to accept his own interpretation of his sin as an atonement for its committal. It was presumptuous in man to set lines and boundaries to the judgment of the Eternal. It was to Rachel that this blessing was vouchsafed, for a time might come when she would find in it a consolation for a revelation that would embitter the sweet waters of life. Both the children were pretty and engaging, and had winning and endear-



ing ways, which in the mother's sightless eyes were magnified a thousandfold.

In the following year a picture by a famous painter was exhibited by the Paris Salon; it was entitled "A Jewish Mother," and represented a woman sitting beneath a cherry tree in flower, with two young children gamboling on the turf at her feet. In the background were two men, the curé of the village and a Jew, the latter being the woman's husband, and looking like a modern Moses. The faces of the men—one full-flushed, with massive features and a grand beard, the other spare and lean, with thin, clear-cut features and a close-shaven face—formed a fine contrast. But although the points of this contrast were brought out in masterly fashion, and although the rustic scene was full of beauty, the supreme attraction of the picture lay in the woman's face. It dwelt in the minds of all who beheld it, and it is not too much to say that it carried with it an influence for good.

So is it also with a pure poem and story; the impression they leave is an incentive to kindly act and tolerant judgment; they soften, they ameliorate, they bring into play the higher attributes of human nature, and in their practical results a benefit is conferred equally upon the sufferer by the wayside and the Samaritan who pours oil upon his wounds.

"Who is the woman?" asked the critics, and no one could answer the question except the painter, and he held his tongue.

The secret was this: The famous painter, passing through the village with the subject of his next great picture in his mind, saw Rachel, and was spellbound

by the purity and grace of her face and figure. Traveling under an assumed name, in order that he should not be disturbed by the trumpet blasts of fame—a proof (clear to few men) that there is pleasure in obscurity—he cast aside the subject he had intended to paint, and determined to take Rachel in its stead. He made himself acquainted with her story, was introduced to Aaron, and contrived to make himself welcome in their home—no difficult matter, for Aaron was ever ready to appreciate intellect.

Many an evening did this painter pass with them, sometimes in company with the curé, and many a friendly argument did they have. He did not ask Rachel and Aaron to be his models, but he made innumerable sketches of them, and remained in the village long enough to accumulate all the principal points and accessories for his picture. Then he departed and painted his masterpiece elsewhere.

Some time afterward he revisited the village with the intention of making acknowledgment for the inspiration, but Aaron and his family had departed, and the painter's secret was undivulged.

As it was with Rachel in winter and spring so was it in summer and autumn. The flowers, the butterflies, the fragrant perfumes of garden and hedgerow, all appealed powerfully to her, and all were in kinship with her. The village children would follow her in the gloaming, singing their simple songs; brawlers, ashamed, would cease contending when she came in sight; women would stand at their cottage doors, and gaze reverently upon her as she passed. Not a harsh thought was harbored against her or hers; her gentle

spirit was an incentive to gentleness; she was a living tender embodiment of peace on earth and good will to all. The whisper of the corn in the autumn, when the golden stalks bowed their heads to the passing breeze, conveyed a divine message to her soul; and indeed she said seriously to Aaron that she sometimes fancied she heard voices in the air, and that they were a pleasure to her.

The three years having expired, the partnership came to an end. The engineer was invited to Russia to undertake some great work for the government, and Aaron would not accompany him.

"In the first place," he said, "I will not expose my wife and children to the rigors of such a climate. In the second place, I will not go because I am a Jew, and because, being one, I should meet with no justice in that land. In the annals of history no greater infamy can be found than the persecution to which my brethren are subjected in that horrible country. In former ages, when the masses lived and died ignorant and unlettered, like the beasts of the field, one can understand how it was that the iron hand ruled and crushed common human rights out of existence; but in these days, when light is spreading all over the world except in such a den of hideous corruption and monstrous tyranny as Russia, it is almost incredible that these cruelties are allowed to be practiced."

"How would you put a stop to them?" asked the engineer.

"I will suppose a case," Aaron answered. "You are a married man, with wife and children, and you have for your neighbor another married man with wife and

children. You bring up your family decently, you treat them kindly, you have an affection for them. All round you other men with wives are doing the same; but there is one exception—your brutal neighbor. Daily and nightly shrieks of agony are heard proceeding from his house, terrible cries of suffering, imploring appeals for help and mercy. He has a numerous family of children, all of whom have been born in the house of which he is a ruler, all of whom recognize him as their king and are ready and anxious to pay him respect, all of whom have a natural claim upon him for protection, all of whom work for him and contribute toward the expenses of his household. Some of these children he loves, some he hates, and it is those he hates whom he oppresses. From them proceed these shrieks of agony, these cries of suffering, these appeals for help. You see them issue from his house torn and bleeding, their faces convulsed with anguish, their hearts racked with woe; you see them return to it—inexorable necessity drives them there; they have no other home, and there is no escape for them—trembling with fear, for the lash awaits them, and torture chambers are there to drive them to the last stage of despair. And their shrieks and supplications eternally pierce the air you breathe, while the oppressed ones stretch forth their hands to the monster who makes their lives a hell upon earth. What do they ask? That they should be allowed to live in peace. But this reasonable and natural request infuriates the tyrant. He flings them to the ground and grinds his iron heel into their bleeding flesh, he spits in their faces, and orders his torturers to draw the cords

tighter around them. It is not for a day, it is not for a week, it is not for a year, it is forever. They die, and leave children behind them who are treated in the same fashion, and for them, as it was with their fathers, there is no hope. No attempt is made to hide these infamies, these cruelties, which would disgrace the lowest order of beasts; they are perpetrated in the light of day, and the monster who is responsible for them sneers at you, and says, 'If you were in their place I would treat you the same.' He laughs at your remonstrances, and draws the cords still tighter, and tortures the quivering flesh still more mercilessly, and cries, 'It is my house—they are my children, and I will do as I please with them. Their bodies are mine, they have no souls!' Talk to him of humanity, and he derides and defies you. You burn with indignation—but what action do you take?"

"It is a strong illustration," said the engineer, "but it is not with nations as with families."

"It is," said Aaron with passionate fervor. "There is no distinction in the eyes of God. We are all members of one family, and the world is our heritage. The world is divided into nations, nations into cities, towns, and villages, and these are subdivided into houses, each having its separate ruler; and though physically and geographically wide apart, all are linked by the one common tie of our common humanity. The same emotions, the same passions, the same aspirations, run through all alike. Does it make an innocent babe a malefactor because he is born in Russia instead of France or England? But it is so considered, and his life is made a misery to him by monsters who, when

they give bloody work to their armies to do, blasphemously call upon the Lord of Hosts to bless their infamous banners."

It was seldom that Aaron expressed himself so passionately, and as the engineer made no reply they did not pursue the discussion.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE FAREWELL.

WHEN it became known that Aaron was about to leave the quiet resting place in which the last few years had been passed, and in which he had enjoyed peace and prosperity, a general feeling of regret was expressed, and efforts were made to induce him to change his resolution. The well-to-do and the poor alike deplored the impending loss, but their appeals were unsuccessful. There was in Aaron a latent ambition, of which he himself was scarcely aware, to move in a larger sphere, and to play his part in life among his own people. His intention had been at first to remain in the pretty French village only long enough to benefit Rachel's health, and had it not been for the chance that threw him and the engineer together, and which opened up enterprises which had led to such fortunate results, he would have fulfilled this intention and have selected some populous center in England to pursue his career.

One venture had led to another, and the success which had attended them was a sufficient inducement to tarry. But now that the partnership was at an end the incentive was gone, and he was not sorry that he was in a certain sense compelled to return to his native land. One thing in his life in the village had weighed

heavily upon him. He was the only Jewish man in the place; there was no synagogue in which he and his family could worship, and it was in his own home that he carried out all the ceremonials of his religion. Not one of these did he omit; he strictly observed the Sabbaths and holidays and fasts, and under no consideration would he perform any kind of work on those occasions.

He obtained his Passover cakes and his meat (killed according to the Jewish law) from neighboring towns, and he did not excite the ire of the local butcher, because he spent more money with him in providing for the wants of the poor than he could have done in his own establishment had it been twice as large as it was. Every year he erected in his garden a tent in which to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, and in all these observances Rachel took a devout and heartfelt pleasure.

If the great painter who had painted her portrait as she sat beneath the cherry tree had been a witness of the scene when the family were assembled in the prettily decorated tent, and Aaron, with the palm branch in his hand, intoned in his rich musical voice, "When I wave the branches do Thou pour down the blessings of thy heavenly influence on Thine habitation, the bridal canopy, the dwelling place of our God," while Rachel, with her young children, stood meekly before him, he would have been inspired to produce another picture which would have rivaled the first in popularity. But much as Aaron had reason to be grateful for, he yearned to follow the practices of his religion among his co-religionists, he yearned to



have the honor of taking the sacred scroll from the ark, to hear the chazan's voice from the pulpit and the melodious chant of the choir, followed by the deep responses of the congregation. There was another consideration.

He wished his son, Joseph, to grow up amid such surroundings, so that he might be fixed firmly in the faith of his forefathers. There was no Jewish school in the village in which the lad could be educated, there was no Jewish society in which he could mix. He looked forward to the future. Joseph would become a man, and in this village there would be no Jewish maiden to attract his heart. He discussed these matters with Rachel.

"Yes," she said, "let us go. But I shall never forget the happy years we have passed here."

"Nor I," said Aaron. "Peace and good fortune have attended us. May a blessing rest upon the village and all the dwellers therein!"

Then Rachel spoke of her poor and of her regret at leaving them.

"We will bear them in remembrance," said Aaron, "and before we bid them farewell something can be done to place them in comfort."

Much was done by Rachel and himself. For some time past he had bestowed a great part of his benefactions in such a manner that those whom he befriended were ignorant of the source from which the good flowed. In order that this should be carried out as he wished he had to seek an agent, and, after consideration, he asked the curé of the village to be his almoner, explaining that he did not wish it to be known that

the money came from him. The curé, much surprised, accepted the office; Aaron was grievously disturbing his opinion of the heretic.

After his meeting with Rachel, which has been described in the previous chapter, he had visited her home with the laudable desire of converting the family to the true faith, and had found himself confronted with peculiar difficulties. He strove to draw them into argument, but in a theological sense they slipped through his fingers. Aaron's course in this respect was premeditated, Rachel's was unconsciously pursued. She listened to all he said, and smilingly acquiesced in his declaration that there was only one road open to heaven's gates.

"It is the road of right-doing, father," she said, "the road of kindness, of doing unto others as you would they should do unto you, of dispensing out of your store, whether it be abundant or not, what you can do to relieve the unfortunate. You are right, father; there is only one road."

By her sweetness and charity, by her practical sympathy with the suffering, she cut the ground from under his feet. He spoke of the saints, and she said they were good men and women, and were receiving their reward. In a word, she took the strength and subtlety out of him, and he yielded with sighs of regret and admiration. With Aaron he was more trenchant, and quite as unsuccessful.

Many of Aaron's humorous observations made the good priest laugh in spite of himself, and the pearls of wisdom which fell from the Jew's lips crumbled his arguments to dust. There was no scoffing or irrever-

ence on Aaron's part; he simply parried the thrusts with a wisdom and humanity deeper and truer than those of which his antagonist could boast.

"My son," said the curé, "would you not make me a Jew if it were in your power?"

"No," replied Aaron, "we do not proselytize, and even if we did you are too good a Christian for me to wish to make you a Jew."

This was one of the puzzling remarks which caused the curé to ponder and which dwelt long in his mind; sometimes he thought that Aaron was a man of deep subtlety, sometimes that he was a man of great simplicity, but whether subtle or simple he felt it impossible to withhold a full measure of respect from one whose eternal lot he sighed to think was perdition and everlasting torment.

That sincerity was the true test of faith, as Aaron declared, he would not admit; there could be no sincerity in a faith that was false, there could be no sincerity if you did not believe as he believed. Nevertheless he had an uncomfortable impression that he was being continually worsted in the peaceful war of words in which they invariably engaged when they came together.

As Aaron was not to be turned from his resolution to leave the country the villagers took steps to show their respect for him. Public meetings were held, which were attended by many persons from surrounding districts, and there was a banquet, of which Aaron did not partake, the food not being cooked after the Jewish mode. He contented himself with fruit and bread, and made a good and sufficient meal. Speeches

were made in his honor, and he was held up as an example to old and young alike.

His response was in admirable taste. He said that the years he had spent among them were the happiest in his life, and that it was with true regret he found himself compelled to leave the village. He spoke of his first coming among them with a beloved wife in a delicate state of health, who had grown well and strong in the beautiful spot. It was not alone the sweet air, he said, which had brought the blessing of health to her; the bond of sympathy which had been established between her and her neighbors had been as a spiritual medicine to her, which had given life a value of which it would otherwise have been deprived.

It was not so much the material reward of our labors that conferred happiness upon us as the feeling that we were passing our days among friends who always had a smile and a pleasant greeting for us. Riches were perishable, kindly remembrances immortal.

The best lessons of life were to be learned from the performance of simple acts of duty, for he regarded it a duty to so conduct ourselves as to make our presence welcome and agreeable to those with whom we were in daily association. As for the kind things that had been said of him, he felt that he was scarcely worthy of them.

"There is," he said, "a leaven of human selfishness in all that we do, and the little I have, with the blessing of God, been enabled to do has conferred upon me a much greater pleasure than it could possibly have conferred upon others. To you and to my residence among you I owe my dear wife's restoration to health,

and it would be ingratitude indeed did I not endeavor to make some return for the good you have showered upon me. I shall never forget you, nor will my wife forget you; in our native land we shall constantly recall the happy years we spent among you, and we shall constantly pray that peace and prosperity may never desert you."

The earnestness and feeling with which these sentiments were uttered were unmistakable and convincing, and when Aaron resumed his seat the eyes of all who had assembled to do him honor were turned upon him approvingly and sympathizingly.

"Ah," groaned the good curé, "were he not a Jew he would be a perfect man."

The flowers which graced the banqueting table were sent by special messenger to Rachel, and the following day she pressed a few and kept them ever afterward among her precious relics. Aaron did not come home till late in the night, and he found Rachel waiting up for him. He delighted her by describing the incidents and speeches of the memorable evening. Aaron was a great smoker, and while they talked he smoked the silver-mounted pipe which he had grown to regard with an affection which was really spiritual. There are in the possession of many men and women dumb memorials of insignificant value which they would not part with for untold gold, and this silver-mounted pipe of Aaron's—Rachel's gift to him in the early years of their married life—was one of these. A special case had been made for it, and he handled it almost with the care and affection he bestowed upon his children.

"*Your health was proposed,*" said Aaron, "*and the*

health of our little ones. What was said about you, my life, gave me much more pleasure than what was said about myself. It abashes one to have to sit and listen to extravagant praises far beyond one's merits, but it is the habit of men to run into extravagance."

"They could say nothing, dear husband, that you do not deserve."

"You, too!" exclaimed Aaron gayly. "It is well for me that you were not there, for you might have been called upon to give your testimony."

"I should not have had courage." She fondly pressed his hand. "I am glad they spoke of me kindly."

"They spoke of you truly, and my heart leaped up within me at what the good curé said of you, for it was he who proposed the toast. I appreciated it more from him than I should have done from anyone else, and he was quite sincere at the moment in all the sentiments he expressed, whatever he may have thought of himself afterward for asking his flock to drink the health of a Jewess. Well, well, it takes all sorts to make a world."

"How much we have to be grateful for!" said Rachel, with a happy sigh.

"Indeed, indeed—for boundless gratitude. Think of what we passed through in Gosport." He paused suddenly. The one experience which weighed upon his conscience brought a dark and troubled shadow into his face.

"Why do you pause, dear? Has not my blindness proved a blessing to us? Do I miss my sight? Nay, I think it has made life sweeter. But for that we

should not have come to this place, but for that we should not have had the means to do something toward the relief of a few suffering and deserving people. What good has sprung from it! Our Lord God be praised!"

Aaron recovered himself.

"There was Mr. Whimpole's visit to us before I commenced business; there were those stupid boys who distressed you so with their revilings, which I managed to turn against themselves. It was this pipe of yours, my life, that gave me the inspiration how to disarm them. It sharpens my faculties, it brings out my best points; it is really to me a friend and counselor. And now I have smoked enough, and it is time to go to bed. I will join you presently."

In solitude the one troubled memory of the past forced itself painfully upon him. Did he deserve what had been said in his honor on this night? He valued men's good opinion, and of all the men he knew he valued most the good opinion of the curé. What would this single-minded, conscientious priest think of him if he were acquainted with the sin of which he had been guilty, the sin of bringing up an alien child in a religion in which she had not been born? He would look upon him with horror.

And it was a bitter punishment that he was compelled to keep this secret locked up in his own breast, that he dared not reveal it to a single human creature, that he dared not say openly, "I have sinned, I have sinned. Have mercy upon me!"

To his own beloved wife, dearer to him than life itself, he had behaved treacherously; even in her he

dared not confide. It was not with Rachel as it was with him; there was no difference in the love she bore her children; they were both equally precious to her.

To fall upon his knees before her and make confession would be like striking a dagger into her heart; it almost drove him mad to think of the shock such a revelation would be to her. No, he must guard his secret and his sin jealously to the last hour of his life. So far as human discovery went he believed that he was safe; the betrayal, if it ever came, lay with himself. True, he had in his possession testimony which might damn him were it to fall into other hands—the little iron safe which Mr. Moss had received from Dr. Spenlove, and at the mother's request had conveyed to him.

In his reflections upon the matter lately the question had intruded itself, "What did this little box contain?" It was impossible for him to say, but he felt instinctively that it contained evidence which would bring his sin home to him. He allowed his thoughts now to dwell upon the mother. From the day on which he received the five hundred pounds from Mr. Gordon's lawyer he had heard nothing from them, nothing from Mr. Moss or from anybody, relating to the matter. Between himself and Mr. Moss there had been a regular, though not very frequent, correspondence, but his friend had never written one word concerning it, and Aaron, of course, had not referred to it. Thus far, therefore, it was buried in a deep grave.

But would this grave never be opened? If other hands were not responsible for the act would it not be his duty to open the grave? The mother had stipu-



lated that, in the event of her husband's death, she should be free to seek her child, should be free to claim the box. Upon this contingency seemed to hang his fate; but there were arguments in his favor.

Mr. Gordon might live, and the mother could do nothing. Arguing that the man died, it was more than probable that his wife had borne other children who had a claim upon her love which she acknowledged. To seek then her child of shame would be the means of bringing disgrace upon these children of her marriage. Would she deliberately do this? He answered the question immediately, No. In the consideration of these phases of the matter he bore in mind that, although the false news of the child's death must of necessity have been communicated to Mr. Gordon by his lawyers, it was likely that it had been kept from the knowledge of the mother. Aaron had been made to understand that Mr. Gordon was a man of inflexible resolution, and that he had pledged himself never, under any circumstances, to make mention of the child to the woman he had married. Even setting this aside, even going to the length of arguing that, hearing of the child's death, Mr. Gordon departed from the strict letter of the resolution, and said to his wife, "Your child is dead," was it not likely that she would reply, "I do not believe it; you tell me so only to deceive me"? In that case, her husband dead and herself childless, would she not search the world over for her offspring?

Setting all this aside, however, the *onus* still devolved upon him to open the grave. One of the stipulations attached to his receipt of the box was that

when Ruth was twenty-one years of age it should be handed over to her. Would he dare to violate this condition? Would he so far tamper with his conscience as to neglect an obligation which might be deemed sacred? The question tortured him; he could not answer it.

He heard Rachel moving in the room above, and with a troubled heart he went up to her.

Thus this night, the events of which were intended to shed honor and glory upon him, ended in sadness, and thus was it proved that a deceit when first practiced may be as a feather weight to the solemn and heavy consequences which follow in its train.

Everything was ready for the departure of the Cohens, which was to take place at the end of the week. Before the day arrived they received other tokens in proof of the appreciation in which they were held. A deputation of workmen waited on Aaron, and presented him with an address. The employers of labor themselves—secretly glad, perhaps, that he was going from among them—paid him a special honor. Rachel's heart throbbed with gratitude and with pride in her husband. But her greatest pleasure—in which were mingled touches of deep sorrow—was derived from the affecting testimony of the poor she had befriended. Old men and women witnessed their departure, and bidding farewell to Rachel, prayed God's blessing upon her. Children gave her flowers, and their childish voices were full of affection. The tears ran from her eyes; she could hardly tear herself away. At length it was over; they were gone; but it was long before her sweet face faded from their memory.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### REVISITS GOSPORT.

THE years that followed until Ruth was grown to womanhood and Joseph was a young man were eventful years for Aaron Cohen and his family. He returned to England the possessor of a moderate fortune, but he had no idea of retiring from the active duties of life. To such a man idleness would have been little less than a living death, and taking up his residence in London, he embarked very soon in enterprises of magnitude. The knowledge he had gained during his partnership in France was of immense value to him, and in conjunction with other men of technical resource he contracted for public works in various parts of the country. His fortune grew, and he gradually became wealthy. He moved from one house to another, and each move was a step up the ladder. A house in Prince's Gate came into the market, and Aaron purchased it, and furnished it with taste and elegance. There he entertained liberally, but not lavishly, for his judgment led him always to the happy mean, and the house became the resort of men and women of intellect and culture. Mr. Moss, who was wedded to Portsmouth, and continued to flourish there, paid periodical visits to London, and was always welcome in the home. He was as musically inclined as

ever, and opportunities were afforded him of hearing the finest singers and players at Prince's Gate. On two or three occasions Aaron readily consented to give an introduction through a concert held in his house to a young aspirant in whom Mr. Moss took an interest, and to other budding talent in the same direction Aaron's rooms were always open. The only conversation between Mr. Moss and Aaron in relation to their intimacy in Gosport occurred some three years after the latter had taken up his residence in London. Aaron had just completed a successful contract, and business had called Mr. Moss to the metropolis.

"I heard to-day," said Mr. Moss, "that you had cleared six or seven thousand pounds by the contract."

"The balance on the right side," replied Aaron, "is a little over seven thousand."

"I congratulate you. The gentleman I spoke with said that if he had had the contract he would have made a profit of three times as much."

"It is likely."

"Then why didn't you do it, Cohen?"

Aaron smiled and shook his head.

"Let us speak of another subject."

"But I want to get at the bottom of this. I should like you to know what the gentleman said about it. His view is that you are ruining the labor market."

"In what way?"

"By high wages and short hours."

"That is a new view."

"You do pay high wages, Cohen, according to what everybody says."

"Oh! it's everybody now as well as your gentleman friend. I pay good wages, and I don't consider them high."

"And the hours are not as long as they might be."

"They are reasonably long enough. If I am satisfied and my workmen are satisfied I give offense to no man."

"You are wrong, Cohen; you give offense to the capitalist."

"I regret to hear it."

"The idea is that you are ruining the capitalist."

"Oh! I am ruining the capitalist now. But if that is the case he is no longer a capitalist."

"You know what I mean. I don't pretend to understand these things as you do, because I have not studied political economy."

"I have, and believe me it is a horse that has been ridden too hard. Mischief will come of it. Apply your common sense. In what way would your friend have made twenty-one thousand pounds out of the contract instead of seven thousand?"

"By getting his labor cheaper and by making his own men work longer hours."

"Exactly. And the difference of fourteen thousand pounds would have gone into his pocket instead of the pockets of his workmen?"

"Yes, of course."

"Ask yourself if that is fair. The wages I pay my men are sufficient to enable them to maintain a home decently, to bring up their families decently, and perhaps, if they are wise and thrifty—only, mind you, if they are wise and thrifty—to make a small profit."

for old age, when they are no longer able to work. Their hours are long enough to give them just a little leisure, which they can employ partly in reasonable amusement and partly in intellectual improvement. I have gone thoroughly into these matters, and know what I am talking about. Men who do their work honestly—and I employ and will keep no others—have a right to fair wages and a little leisure, and I decline to grind my men down after the fashion of the extreme political economist. The contract I have just completed was tendered for in an open market. My tender was the lowest and was accepted. I make a considerable sum of money out of it, and each of my men contributes a mickle toward it. They believe I have treated them fairly, and I am certain they have treated me fairly. Upon those lines I intend to make my way. Your sweater is a political economist. I am not a sweater. It is the course I pursued in France, and by it I laid the foundation of what may prove to be a great fortune. I am tendering now for other contracts, and I shall obtain my share, and shall pursue precisely the same course. Mr. Moss, you and I are Jews. At a great disadvantage because of the nature of your business, which I myself once intended to follow, you have made yourself respected in the town in which you reside. I, on my part, wish to make myself respected here. Surely there is no race in the world to which it is greater honor, and should be a greater pride, to belong than the Jewish race; and by my conduct through life I trust I shall do nothing to tarnish that honor or lower that pride. It may or may not be for that reason that I decline to follow the

political economist to the depths into which he has fallen."

Mr. Moss' eyes gleamed; Aaron had touched a sympathetic chord; the men shook hands and smiled cordially at each other.

"When you were in Gosport," said Mr. Moss, "I ought to have asked you to go into partnership with me."

"If you had made me the offer," responded Aaron, "I'm afraid I should have accepted it."

"Lucky for you that I missed my opportunity. It is a fortunate thing that you went to France when you did."

"Very fortunate. It opened up a new career for me; it restored my dear wife to health; my son was born there."

"About the poor child I brought to you in Gosport, Cohen; we have never spoken of it."

"That is true."

"Did the lawyers ever write to you again?"

"Never."

"And I have heard nothing. The iron box I gave you—you have it still, I suppose?"

"I have it still."

"I have often wondered what it contains, and whether the mother will ever call for it."

"If she does it shall be handed to her in the same condition as you handed it to me. But she does not know in whose possession it is?"

"No, she does not know, and she can only obtain the information from Mr. Gordon's lawyers. My lips are sealed."

Aaron considered a moment. This opening up of the dreaded subject made him feel as if a sword were hanging over his head, but his sense of justice impelled him to say, "It may happen that the mother will wish to have the box restored to her, and that the lawyers may refuse to give her the information that it is in my possession. She may seek elsewhere for a clew, and may be directed to you."

"I shall not enlighten her," said Mr. Moss.

"My desire is that you do enlighten her. It is her property, and I have no right to retain it."

"Very well, Cohen, if you wish it; but nothing is more unlikely than your ever being troubled with her, or ever seeing her. She has forgotten all about it long ago."

"You are mistaken. A mother never forgets."

"And now, Cohen, I have a message for you from Mrs. Moss. She is burning to see you and cannot come to London. We are about to have an addition to our family; that will be the sixteenth. Upon my word, I don't know when we are going to stop. Is it too much to ask you to pay us a visit?"

"Not at all; it will give me great pleasure. When?"

"It will give Mrs. Moss greater pleasure, Cohen," said Mr. Moss, rubbing his hands joyously. "I am going back the day after to-morrow. Will that time suit you?"

"Yes, I will accompany you."

The visit was paid, and lasted three days. Before he returned to London Aaron went to Gosport. Nothing was changed in the ancient town. The house he had occupied had been rebuilt; the streets were the



same, the names over the shops were unaltered. He saw Mr. Whimpole in his shop attending to a customer, and saw other men and women whom he recognized, but to whom he did not speak. He made his way to the churchyard where his child was buried, and he stood and prayed over the grave.

"Forgive me, O Lord of Hosts," he said audibly, "that I should have laid my child to rest in a Christian churchyard. It was to save my beloved. Forgive me! Have mercy upon me!"

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### WHAT SHALL BE DONE TO THE MAN WHOM THE KING DELIGHTETH TO HONOR?

IN the autumn of the year 1891 a number of influential persons wended their way to Aaron Cohen's house to take part in a function of a peculiarly interesting nature. They comprised representatives of literature and the arts, of politics, science, and commerce, and among them were delegates of the press who were deputed to report the proceedings for their several journals.

That the pen is mightier than the sword was, at an earlier period in the world's history, open to dispute, but the contention exists no longer, and although the day is far distant when the lion shall lie down with the lamb, the press is now the pre-eminent dictator of peace and war, and can effectually hasten or retard the conflict of nations. It is an open question whether its invasion of the arena of private life is a beneficial feature in the power it wields, but it is useless to resist its march in this direction, and earnest as may be a man's desire to hide his light under a bushel, he does not live to see it gratified.

When a movement was set afoot to make some sort of semi-private, semi-public recognition of the remarkable position attained by the hero of this story he did not receive it with any kind of pleasure, and he made

an effort to avoid it. That his effort was not successful was not so much due to the perseverance of the leaders of the movement as to a few simple words uttered by his wife.

"It will give me pleasure," she said.

He did not argue with her; he yielded immediately, and allowed himself to be carried with the stream. Never in the course of their happy married life had he failed to comply with her lightest wish; never had there been the least conflict between them; to each of them the word of the other was law, and it was love's cheerful duty to obey.

Remarkable, indeed, was the position he had won. From the day of his return to England there had been no break in his prosperity; every enterprise he undertook flourished, and the old saying was applied to him, "Everything he touches turns to gold." His reputation, however, was not based on the fact that he was a lucky but that he was a just and charitable man. No appeal for any good purpose was made to him in vain; his purse was ever open, and he was ever ready to respond. Among his co-religionists he was a power, and his advice was asked and taken by high and low alike. His character was so well-known that the poorest Jew, in an hour of difficulty, did not hesitate to go to him for counsel, and only those held back whose conduct would not stand the searching light he threw upon all worldly matters. He did not confine his labors and charities to the Jewish community; his name was to be found among the administrators of all their benevolent funds, and it was also to be found on the lists of numberless Christian charities.

In so generous a spirit did he meet the appeals that were made to him, and so devoid of narrowness were his benefactions, that he grew into the esteem of all classes of society as a large-hearted, honorable, and benevolent gentleman. Of course he was sometimes beguiled into bestowing money upon unworthy objects or persons, but when this came to his knowledge it did not affect him. "It is but human nature," he would say. "Where lives the man who does not make mistakes?"

In the wide scope of his charities he had curious experiences, and one of these got to be known and quoted.

A gentleman visited him and asked for a contribution to an old-established society known all the world over. Aaron inquired the name and objects of the society.

"You have doubtless heard of it," replied the gentleman. "It is for the promotion of Christianity among the Jews."

Aaron smiled as he said, "But, my dear sir, I am myself a Jew."

"I am aware of it," said the gentleman, "and the reason I make the appeal is that you have been quoted to me as a man who has no narrow prejudices, and who in no sense of the word could be called dogmatic or prejudiced."

"It is, then, a compliment you are paying me by asking me to contribute to a fund which is antagonistic to my race."

"In your view antagonistic," observed the gentleman.

"I see. Meaning that my view is not necessarily the right view."

The gentleman nodded courteously. He was not a collector for the society, nor a paid officer, but a gentleman of means who, in a smaller way than Aaron, was also noted for his benevolence.

"I cannot but consider the matter seriously," said Aaron thoughtfully, "for there can be no doubt of your sincerity. Still it occurs to me that if we were both equally sincere in our advocacy of objects of a similar nature it would be as well that we should pause and ask ourselves this question: Instead of endeavoring to convert Jews or Christians to a faith in which they were not born, would it not be better to employ ourselves in making those who call themselves Christians true Christians, and those who call themselves Jews true Jews?"

"There is force in your argument," said the gentleman, "but it is no answer to my appeal for a contribution to the objects of my society."

"Can you furnish me with particulars," Aaron then said, "of the working of the society?"

"I have brought the papers with me, anticipating your request."

Aaron looked over the printed books and papers handed to him, and made certain calculations upon paper.

"I perceive," he said, "that you take credit to yourselves for making a certain number of conversions during the past five years, and that you have spent a great deal of money in these conversions. The number of conversions is very small, the amount of money ex-

pended very large. I have worked out the sum, and I see that each conversion has cost you nearly eleven thousand pounds. You find these wavering Jews very expensive?"

"Very expensive," assented the gentleman, with a half-humorous sigh.

"Well, my dear sir," said Aaron, "I will make a proposition to you. You are zealous in the furtherance of an object which you believe to be worthy, and I am zealous in the furtherance of an object which I believe to be worthy. I will write a check in contribution to your object on the understanding that you write a check for half the amount in contribution to mine. Do not be afraid; it is not for the promotion of Judaism among the Christians."

The gentleman, who was fairly liberal-minded, laughed good-humoredly at the proposition as he said:

"I consent, but you are richer than I, and I must stipulate that your check is not for a large amount."

"It shall not be large," said Aaron, and he filled in a check for twenty pounds.

The gentleman, somewhat relieved, wrote his check for ten pounds, and they exchanged documents.

"My contribution," observed Aaron, "represents the five hundred and fiftieth part of one transitory and probably worldly and insincere conversion, your contribution represents the fiftieth part of a perpetual endowment of one sick bed in a hospital. You will pardon me for saying that I think I have the best of the transaction."

A word as to Aaron Cohen's material position.

The world gave him credit for being exceedingly wealthy, but he was not really so. He had money, and to spare, and his private establishment was conducted on a liberal scale. Roughly speaking, had he retired in 1891 he might have done so on an income of some five thousand pounds, whereas popular rumor would have credited him with ten times as much. The reason for this was that a considerable portion of the profits of his enterprise was regularly given anonymously to every public movement for the good of the people and for the relief of the suffering. Great curiosity had been evinced for a long time past as to who was the anonymous donor of large sums of money in response to these appeals. A colliery disaster, a flood, an earthquake in a distant country, a case of public destitution—to one and all of these came a large contribution from a person who adopted the most careful means to preserve his anonymity, and who signed himself "Mercy."

These charitable donations were Aaron's constant appeal to the Divine Throne for mercy and forgiveness for the one sin of his life, and thus did he effectually guard against becoming a millionaire.

The esteem in which he was held was to be demonstrated by two presentations, one a portrait of himself, by a renowned English painter, the other a picture also, the subject being withheld from his knowledge. This second painting was no other than the picture of Rachel sitting beneath the cherry tree, which had created excitement in the Paris Salon more than a dozen years ago. It had been purchased by a collector, who had lately died. After his death his col-

lection was brought to the hammer, and this particular picture purchased by a London dealer, who exhibited it in his shop.

It was originally intended that a presentation of silver should be made with Aaron's portrait, but a friend of his happened to see the picture in London, and was struck by the marvelous resemblance of the principal figure to Rachel. He made some inquiries privately of Aaron respecting his sojourn in the south of France, and learned that there was a certain cherry tree in his garden there beneath which Rachél was in the habit of sitting in fine weather, that he had a friend, the curé of the village, and that one summer a French painter visited the village and made a great many sketches of Rachel and the cherry tree.

Aaron's friend obtained from the London dealer some information of the history of the picture, and of the year it was exhibited, and putting this and that together he came to the correct conclusion that Rachel had unconsciously sat for the painter. It was an interesting discovery, and the idea of a silver presentation was put aside, and the picture substituted in its place.

Mr. Moss, of course, came from Portsmouth to attend the function.

It is sad to relate that of late years the same good fortune had not attended him as had attended his friend Aaron. It was his own fault; he had embarked in speculations outside the scope of his legitimate business, and when these speculations came to grief he found himself by no means so well off as he was at the commencement of this history. It made no differ-



ence in Aaron's friendship for him; it may be said, indeed, to have strengthened it. In a period of difficulty Aaron came forward voluntarily, and afforded practical assistance to his old friend. Another strengthening tie was also to be added to this friendship. On a visit to Portsmouth Aaron's son Joseph fell in love with one of Mr. Moss' daughters, Rose, a sweet girl, of whom Rachel was very fond. Joseph was too young yet to marry, but with the consent of his parents an engagement was entered into between the young people, and there was joy in Mr. Moss' estimable family.

"There never was such a man as Aaron Cohen," said Mr. Moss to his wife and children. "He is a credit and an honor to the Jewish race."

In which opinion there was not a Jew in England who did not agree with him.

It was a consequence of this family arrangement that Rose was often invited to spend a few weeks with the Cohens in London, and she was in their house on the day of the presentations. Her lover was absent, and had been out of England for some months. He held a position of responsibility with a large contractor, and had been sent to Austria upon business of an important nature. He was expected home at the end of the week, but was only to remain in England two days, his passage to Australia being already taken, to look after a railway contract which had been secured by his employer, Mr. Monmouth. He was expected to be away eight or nine months, and upon his return home the marriage was to take place. Neither was *their other child*, Ruth, a witness of the presentations.

She had invited herself to Portsmouth, to spend a week or two with Mrs. Moss. Rachel missed her, Aaron did not. Although he could not fix the exact day of her birth, he knew that she would soon be twenty-one years of age, when the duty would devolve upon him of delivering to her the iron box of which he had been made the custodian, and he was in an agony as to how he should act. Every day that passed deepened his trouble, and it was perhaps to this that his growing impression may be ascribed that shadows were gathering over his house which might wreck the happiness of his beloved wife.

Again and again had he debated the matter with himself without being able to arrive at any comforting conclusion. Rachel doted on her children. She could not see what Aaron could see—that there was something weighing also upon Ruth's mind which she was concealing from them, and that the confidence was wanting which should exist between a child and her parents. However, on this day he could not give himself up to these disturbing reflections; he had consented to accept an honor of which he deemed himself unworthy, and it was incumbent upon him that he should not betray himself.

There was still a little time left to him to decide upon his course of action. He was beginning to tamper with himself. The man of upright mind was at this period laying himself open to dangerous casuistical temptations. Even from such pure, unselfish love as he entertained for the wife who was deserving of love in its sweetest and purest aspects may spring an *upas tree* to poison the atmosphere we breathe.

Among the company was an old friend of ours, Dr. Spenlove, who had attained an eminent position in London. The hundred pounds which Mr. Gordon had left for his acceptance had proved the turning point in his career, and he was at the top of the tree in his profession. A man as kind-hearted as he was of necessity mixed up with many benevolent and public movements. Aaron, whom till this day he had never met, had subscribed to some of the charities in which he was interested, and he gladly availed himself of the opportunity of becoming acquainted with him. When the company were assembled in the reception room of Aaron's house Dr. Spenlove happened to be standing next to Mr. Moss, whom he had not seen since he left Portsmouth. Except for the mark of years, which did not tell heavily upon him, Mr. Moss was the same jovial-featured, bright-eyed man as ever; Dr. Spenlove had altered; the fashion of his hair was different, the thoughtful lines in his face had deepened, he had grown stouter. So that when the two looked at each other the first sign of recognition came from Dr. Spenlove.

"If I am not mistaken," he said, "we have met before."

Mr. Moss, looking at him, was puzzled for a moment. "In Portsmouth," added Dr. Spenlove, jogging his memory.

"Dr. Spenlove?"

"The same."

They shook hands. "It is strange," said Mr. Moss, "that after the lapse of years we should meet in this house."

"Why is our meeting in this house strange?" inquired Dr. Spenlove.

The question recalled Mr. Moss to himself. The one incident which formed a link between them was that connected with a poor woman and her babe whom they rescued from impending death on a snowy night twenty years ago. But he had not made Dr. Spenlove acquainted with the name of the man to whom he had intrusted the child, and upon this point his lips were sealed.

"I mean," he said, "that the circumstances of our meeting here and in Portsmouth are different."

"Widely different," observed Dr. Spenlove. "I have never forgotten that sad night, have never forgotten your kindness."

"Not worth mentioning."

"But worth bearing in remembrance, as all acts of kindness are. I have heard nothing more of the matter from that time to this. What became of the child, Mr. Moss?"

"She died very shortly afterward. A happy release."

"Death is a happy release to many. It was hardly to be expected that the child would live long after the exposure on such a night. She was almost buried in the snow. And the mother, Mr. Moss?"

"I have heard nothing of her whatever."

"Nor have I."

The conversation ceased here. The proceedings had commenced, and a gentleman was speaking. He was a man of discretion, which all orators are not. He touched lightly and pertinently upon the reputation which Mr. Aaron Cohen had earned by his unremitting

acts of benevolence and by the worthiness of his career. Such a man deserved the good fortune which had attended him, and such a man's career could not fail to be an incentive to worthy endeavor. Rachel, seated by her husband, and turning her sightless eyes upon the audience, who were only spiritually visible to her, listened to the speaker in gratitude and delight. It was not that she had waited for this moment to learn that she was wedded to an upright and noble man, but it was an unspeakable happiness to her to hear from the lips of others that he was appreciated as he deserved, that he was understood as she understood him.

It was natural, said the speaker, that the gentleman in whose honor they had that day assembled should be held in the highest esteem by his co-religionists, but it was a glory that in a Christian country a Jew should have won from all classes of a mixed community a name which would be enrolled upon those pages of our social history which most fitly represent the march of true civilization and humanity. They were not there to glorify money; they were not there to glorify worldly prosperity; they were there to pay tribute to one whose example Christians might follow, a man without stain, without reproach. The influence of such a man in removing—no, not in removing, but obliterating, the prejudices of caste was lasting and all-powerful. He regarded it as a privilege that he had been deputed to express the general sentiment with respect to Mr. Aaron Cohen. This sentiment, he begged to add, was not confined to Mr. Cohen, but *included* his wife, whose charities and benevolence

were perhaps even more widely known and recognized than those of the partner of her joys and sorrows.

In the presence of this estimable couple it was difficult to speak as freely as he would wish, but he was sure they would understand that in wishing them long life and happiness he was wishing them much more than he dared to express in their hearing, and that there was but one feeling entertained toward them, a feeling not of mere respect and esteem, but of affection and love. In the name of the subscribers he offered for their acceptance two paintings, one a portrait of Mr. Cohen by an artist of renown, for which he had been good enough to sit; the other a painting which probably they would look upon now for the first time. The latter picture was an accidental discovery, but Mr. Cohen would tell them whether they were right in seizing the opportunity to obtain it, and whether they were right in their belief that his esteemed wife had unconsciously inspired the artist, who had availed himself of a happy chance to immortalize himself.

The pictures were then unveiled amid general acclamation, and if ever Rachel wished for the blessing of sight to be restored to her it was at that moment; but it was only for a moment. The dependence she placed upon her husband, the trust she had in him, the pleasure she derived from his eloquent and sympathetic descriptions of what was hidden from her, were of such a nature that she sometimes said inly, "I am thankful I can see only through the eyes of my dear husband."

The portrait of himself, from his frequent sittings, was familiar to Aaron Cohen, but the picture of his

beloved sitting beneath the cherry tree was a delightful surprise to him. It was an exquisitely painted scene, and Rachel's portrait was as faithful as if she had given months of her time toward its successful accomplishment.

Aaron's response was happy up to a certain point. Except to pay a deserved compliment to the artist and to express his gratitude to the subscribers he said little about the portrait of himself. The presentation of the second picture supplied the theme for the principal part of his speech. He said there was no doubt that it was a portrait of his dear wife, and he recalled the time they had passed in the south of France, and described all the circumstances of the happy chance that had led to the painting of the picture. He was grateful for that chance because of the pleasure it would afford his beloved wife, who until to-day had been as ignorant as himself that such a painting was in existence.

"I went to the south of France," he said, "in the hope that my wife, who was in a delicate state of health, would be benefited by a short stay there. My hope was more than realized; she grew strong there; my son, whose absence from England deprives him of the pleasure of being present on this interesting occasion, was born there, and there the foundation of my prosperity was laid. It might be inferred from this that I believe all the events of a man's life are ruled by chance, but such is not my belief. There is an all-seeing Providence who shows us the right path. He speaks through our reason and our consciences, and **except** for the accident of birth, which lays a heavy

burden upon many unfortunate beings, and which should render them not fully responsible for the evil they do, we ourselves are responsible for the consequences of our actions. We must accept the responsibility and the consequences."

He paused a few moments before he continued.

"When men of fair intelligence err they err consciously; it is useless for them to say that they erred in ignorance of the consequences. They must know if they write with black ink that their writing must be black."

He paused again.

"But it may be that a man commits a conscious error through his affections, and if that error inflicts injury upon no living being—if it even confer a benefit upon one or more—there may be some palliation of his error. In stating that you set for me a standard too high I am stating my firm belief. No man is stainless, no man is without reproach; the doctrine of infallibility applied to human affairs is monstrous and wicked; it is an arrogation of divine power. I am, as all men are, open to error; in my life, as in the lives of all men, there have been mistakes, but I may still take the credit to myself that if I have committed a conscious error it has harmed no living soul, and that it has sprung from those affections which sweeten and bless our lives. A reference has been made to my being a Jew. I glory that I am one. The traditions and history of the race to which I am proud to belong have been of invaluable service to me, and to the circumstance of my being a Jew I owe the incidents of this day, which will ever be a proud memory to me and to my family.

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In the name of my dear wife and my own I thank you cordially, sincerely, and gratefully for the honor you have paid to us—an honor not beyond my wife's merits, but far beyond my own."

Other speeches followed, and when the proceedings were at an end Dr. Spenlove asked Mr. Moss to introduce him to Mr. Cohen.

"Cohen," said Mr. Moss, "Dr. Spenlove wishes to know you."

Aaron started.

He never forgot a name or a face, and he recollected the mention of Dr. Spenlove's name when Mr. Moss came to him in Gosport with the child.

"Without exactly knowing it, perhaps," said Dr. Spenlove, "you have been most kind in movements in which I have taken an interest. I am glad of the opportunity of making your acquaintance."

Nothing more; no reference to the private matter.

Aaron breathed more freely.

He responded to Dr. Spenlove's advances, and the gentlemen parted friends.

Rose Moss was in the room during the proceedings, and her fair young face beamed with pride; it was her lover's father who was thus honored, and she felt that she had, through Aaron Cohen's son, a share in that honor.

When the gratifying but fatiguing labors of the day were at an end, and Aaron, Rachel, and Rose were alone, Rachel said:

"I am sorry, dear Rose, that Joseph was not here to hear what was said about his father."

"It would not have made him love and honor him more," said Rose.

Rachel pressed her hand and kissed her; she had grown to love this sweet and simple girl, who seemed to have but one thought in life, her lover. Then the sightless woman asked them to describe the picture to her, and she listened in an ecstasy of happiness to their words.

"Is it not wonderful?" she said to Aaron. "A famous picture, they said, and I the principal figure. What can the painter have seen in me?"

"What all men see, my life," replied Aaron, "but what no one knows as I know."

"It has been a happy day," sighed Rachel; ~~she had~~ between them, each holding a hand. "You did not hear from our dear Ruth this morning?"

"No, dear mother." For thus was Rose already permitted to address Rachel.

"She will be home in two days, and our dear lad as well. I wish he were back from Australia, even before he has started, and so do you, my dear. But time soon passes. Just now it seems but yesterday that we were in France."

The day waned. Rachel and Rose were together; Aaron was in his study, writing letters. A servant entered.

"A gentleman to see you, sir."

Aaron looked at the card, which bore the name of Mr. Richard Dillworthy.

"I am busy," said Aaron. "Does he wish to see me particularly? Ask him if he can call again."

"He said his business was pressing, sir."

"Show him in."

The servant ushered the visitor into the room—a

slightly built, middle-aged man, with iron-gray hair and whiskers. Aaron motioned him to a chair, and he placed a card on the table bearing the name and address of a firm of lawyers.

"I am Mr. Dillworthy, of Dillworthy, Maryx & Co.," he said.

"Yes."

"I have come to speak to you upon a family matter——"

"A family matter!" exclaimed Aaron, interrupting him.

"On behalf of a client. I shall take it as a favor if you will regard this interview as private."

"Certainly."

"It refers principally to your daughter, Miss Ruth Colien."

## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE HONORABLE PERCY STORNDALE.

FOR the second time on this eventful day Aaron felt as if his sin were about to be brought home to him, as if the temple which, by long years of honorable and upright conduct, he had built for himself were about to crumble to dust.

In that temple was enshrined not only his good name, but what was of far greater value to him, his wife's happiness and peace of mind. It was too late now to go to her frankly and say: "Ruth is not our child." Out of Rachel's innate goodness and sweetness sprang the deep love she bore for the young girl; the suggestion of love may come from without, but the spirit of love is the offspring of one's own heart, and it is made enduring and ennobling by one's own higher qualities; and in a like manner it is one's lower passions which debase and degrade it.

In whatever fashion Rachel would receive her husband's confession he knew full well that it would inflict upon her the most exquisite suffering; the cherished ideal of her life would be shattered, and she would sit forever afterward in sackcloth and ashes. He had sown a harvest of woe, and his constant fervent prayer was that he might not be compelled to reap it with his own hands.



Agitated as he was, he did not betray himself by word or sign, but by a courteous movement of his hand invited his visitor to proceed.

"It is a family matter," said Mr. Dillworthy, "of a peculiarly delicate nature, and my client thought it could best be arranged in a private personal interview."

"Being of such a nature," observed Aaron, "would it not have been better that it should be arranged privately between the parties interested instead of through an intermediary?"

"Possibly, possibly, but my client holds strong views, and feels he could scarcely trust himself."

"Favor me with the name of your client."

"Lord Storndale."

"Lord Storndale? I have not the pleasure of his acquaintance."

"But you are familiar with his name?"

"Not at all. It is the first time I have heard it."

"You surprise me. Lord Storndale is a peer."

"I know very few peers, and have had no occasion to study the peerage."

"But, pardon me, Storndale is the name; it may have escaped you."

"I repeat, the name is strange to me."

"I do not presume to doubt you, but it introduces a new element into the matter. Your daughter, then, has never mentioned the Honorable Percy Storndale to you?"

"Never; and I am at a loss to understand the association of their names."

*The lawyer paused. In this unexpected turn of*

affairs a deviation suggested itself to his legal mind which would be likely to assist him.

"Mr. Cohen, you have the reputation of being an earnest and sincere Jew."

"I follow the precepts and the obligations of my faith," said Aaron, with a searching glance at his visitor.

"In this back-sliding and time-serving age orthodoxy—especially, I should say, in the Jewish religion—has a hard time of it. The customs and duties of an enlightened civilization must clash severely with the precepts and obligations you speak of. It is because of the difficulty—perhaps the impossibility—of following the hard and fast laws of the Pentateuch that divisions have taken place, as with all religions, and that you have among you men who call themselves Reformed Jews."

"Surely it is not part of your mission to discuss this matter with me," said Aaron, who had no desire to enter into such questions with a stranger.

"No, it is not, and I do not pretend to understand it; but in a general way the subject is interesting to me. If you will permit me, I should like to ask you one question."

Aaron signified assent.

"What is your opinion of mixed marriages?"

Aaron did not answer immediately; he had a suspicion that there was something behind, but the subject was one regarding which both he and Rachel held a strong view, and he felt he would be guilty of an unworthy evasion if he refused to reply.

"I do not approve of them," he said.

"You set me at ease," said the lawyer, "and it will gratify Lord Stornedale to hear that you and he are in agreement upon the question. As our interview is private I may speak freely. Unhappily Lord Stornedale is a poor peer. Since he came into the title he has had great difficulties to contend with, and as his estates lay chiefly in Ireland, these difficulties have been of late years increased. Happily or unhappily, also, he has a large family, two daughters and six sons. Of these sons the Honorable Percy Stornedale is the youngest. I do not know who is the more to be pitied, a poor peer struggling with mortgages, decreased rents, and the expenses of a large family, or a younger son who comes into the world with the expectation that he is to be provided for, and whose father can allow him at the utmost two hundred and fifty or three hundred a year. Father and son have both to keep up appearances, and the son's allowance will scarcely pay his tailor's and his glover's bill. There are a thousand things he wants, and to which he believes himself entitled—flowers, horses, clubs, a stall at the theater, and so on and so on, *ad infinitum*. The consequence is that the young gentleman gets into debt, which grows and grows. Perhaps he thinks of a means of paying his creditors—he plunges on a horse, he plays for high stakes at his club. You know the result. Into the mire deeper and deeper. A sad picture, Mr. Cohen."

"Very sad," said Aaron, who had listened patiently and knew that the crucial part of the lawyer's mission—that which affected himself and Ruth—had not yet been reached.

"Lord Storndale," continued the lawyer, "is a gentleman of exclusive views, and is perhaps prouder in his poverty than he would be with a rent roll of a hundred thousand a year. His son's extravagances and debts are not hidden from his knowledge—the money lenders take care of that. From time to time, and at a great sacrifice, he extricates the young scapegrace from temporary difficulties, but at length he comes to a full stop. His own means are exhausted, and willing as he may be to keep putting his hand in his pocket, it is useless to do so, because the pocket is empty. But he has some influence in a small way, and he obtains for his son the offer of a post in the colonies, not very grand certainly, but affording an opening which may lead to something better if the young gentleman will only condescend to look at life seriously—which, as a rule, such young fellows decline to do until it is too late. However, a father, whether he be a peer or a common laborer, can do no more than his duty. He informs his son of the appointment he has obtained for him, and the scapegrace—I am speaking quite openly, Mr. Cohen; the Honorable Percy Storndale *is* one—declines to accept it. 'Why?' asks the astonished father. 'I cannot live on it,' replies the son. Then the father points out how he can live on it by cutting down some of his extravagances, and that he may find opportunities in the colonies which he can never meet with here. The son remains obdurate. 'There is another reason for your refusal,' says the father. 'There is,' the son admits. 'I prefer to live in London; it is the only city in the world worth living in.' 'And starving in,' suggests the father. The scapegrace



shrugs his shoulders, and says something will turn up, and that he will not submit to banishment because he happens to have been born a few years too late—a reflection upon his brother, the eldest son, who in course of time will inherit the family embarrassments and mortgages. The father remonstrates, argues, entreats, but the young man will not give way. Meanwhile the appointment is bestowed upon another and a worthier gentleman, and the chance is lost. I trust I am not wearying you.”

“No; I am attending to all you say, and waiting to hear how my daughter’s name comes to be mixed up with the family history you are giving me.”

“You will understand everything presently. My object is to make the matter perfectly clear, and to have no concealment. For this reason I wish you to be aware of the character of the young gentleman, and I am describing it carefully at the express wish of his father. At the same time I lay no positive charge against him; I am not saying he is a bad man, but an undesirable man. There are thousands of young fellows who are living just such a careless, irresponsible, reckless life, who get into debt, who gamble, and who ultimately find themselves passing through the bankruptcy court. Young men without balance, Mr. Cohen, and who, in consequence, topple over. They sow trouble wherever they go, and they are always smiling, self-possessed, and pleasant-mannered. Women especially are caught by these externals, but speaking myself as the father of grown-up daughters, I should be sorry to see one of that class visiting my house as a suitor to one of my girls.” Aaron started,

but did not speak. "Lord Storndale suspected that there was another reason, which his son had not mentioned, for his refusal of the colonial appointment, and in a short time his suspicions were confirmed. It came to his knowledge that his son was paying attentions to a young lady whom he was in the habit of meeting at garden parties and tennis, and he taxed the young gentleman with it. His son did not deny it; he said that he loved the lady, that her father was very wealthy, and that she was in every way presentable. 'I do not know,' said the young man, 'whether the circumstance of her father being a commoner will prejudice you against him.' Lord Storndale replied that he would have preferred his son had chosen from his own rank, but that marriages between rich commoners and members of the aristocracy were not unusual in these days, and that he would sanction the match if the lady's father was a gentleman. To be honest with you, Mr. Cohen, Lord Storndale has no liking for commoners who have made fortunes in trade or by speculating, but he did not allow these scruples to weigh with him, his hope being that the proposed union would be the means of extricating his son from his difficulties. The young man said that the lady's father was a gentleman widely known for his benevolence and uprightness of character, and that he was held in universal esteem. Up to this point the interview had been of an amiable nature, but then arose an insurmountable difficulty. 'Who is the gentleman?' inquired Lord Storndale. 'Mr. Aaron Cohen,' replied the young man." Observing Aaron's agitation, the lawyer suspended his nar-

ration and said: "Pardon me; you were about to speak."

Aaron by a great effort controlled himself.

"I will wait till you have quite finished, Mr. Dillworthy. Before I commit myself it will be as well that I should be in possession of all the facts."

"Quite so. I have been explicit and circumstantial in order that there shall be no mistake. When I have finished you will have few, if any, questions to ask, because you will know everything it is in my power to tell. Upon hearing your name his lordship remarked that it was a Jewish name. 'Yes,' said the young man, 'he is a Jew.' Lord Storndale was angry and distressed. I admit that it is an unreasonable prejudice, but he has an invincible dislike to Jews, and it shocked him to think that his son contemplated a marriage with a Jewess. I need dwell no longer upon the interview, which now took a stormy turn, and it ended by the son abruptly leaving the room. On no account whatever, Mr. Cohen, will Lord Storndale or any member of the family consent to such an alliance; if it is accomplished the young man will be thrown upon his own resources, and his wife will not be recognized by his kinsfolk. The trouble has already reached a climax. The young gentleman is hot-headed—a Storndale failing—and he declined to listen to remonstrances; the consequence is that he has been forbidden his father's home till he comes to reason. But despite his extravagances and the constant and perplexing involvements issuing therefrom, his father has an affection for him, and is bent upon saving his family from——"

The lawyer pausing here, with an awkward cough, as though he was choking down a word, Aaron quietly added it.

"Disgrace?"

"Well, yes," said Mr. Dillworthy briskly, "we will not mince matters. It is not my word, but Lord Storn-dale's. He would account such an alliance a disgrace. I will say nothing in his excuse. In all civilized countries we have living evidences of happy unions between members of the aristocracy and wealthy daughters of Israel, and also living evidences of happy mixed marriages between persons neither aristocratic nor wealthy; and these might be brought forward as powerful arguments against the view my client entertains. But they would have no weight with him. We must take into consideration the pride of race."

"Yes," said Aaron, still speaking in a quiet tone, "we must take that into consideration. You have not quite finished, sir."

"Not quite. As a last resource Lord Storn-dale consulted me, and intrusted me with a painful task. He requested me to call upon you and represent the matter in the plainest terms, which I have endeavored to do, omitting or concealing no single incident of the unhappy affair. I am deputed to ask you to take a course with your daughter similar to that he has taken with his son—that is, to absolutely forbid the union. The young gentleman is in a state of extreme pecuniary embarrassment, and it is possible—I do not state it as a fact, but merely as a presumption—that he reckons upon your aid to settle with his creditors. When he finds that this aid will not be forthcoming,

and that he cannot depend upon your making a suitable settlement upon your daughter, he is not unlikely, for prudential reasons, to beat a retreat. A good end will thus be served, and much future misery averted. You will gather from what I have said that I do not believe the Honorable Percy Storndale possesses qualities which would make your daughter happy."

"You are commissioned to take my answer to Lord Storndale."

"I am."

"I may trust you to convey that answer as nearly as possible in my own words?"

"It shall be my endeavor."

"You will tell him, then, that the mission with which he has intrusted you is a surprise to me. Until this day I never heard his name, nor until this day have I heard the name of his son. Never before, to my knowledge, has my daughter concealed anything from me or from her mother, and I need not say that what you have revealed is a grief to me, and will be to her mother if it comes to her ears. That our daughter must have been under the spell of some powerful influence to induce her to keep us in ignorance of what was passing between her and your client's son is in my judgment indisputable, and the inference is that this influence has been exercised by the young man, who must have bound her by a solemn promise to say nothing of the attentions he has paid to her. I have no hesitation in declaring that no honorable man would have acted in a manner so clandestine and secret, and you will inform Lord Storndale that in my opinion his son is not a man of honor. A young girl's trustful-

ness and innocence should be her safeguard, but here they have been basely used by a man who, according to your own statement, by his external accomplishments has unhappily attracted her. It has not been concealed from us that our daughter has mixed a little in society outside our special family circle, for in her participation of these, as I hoped, harmless pleasures she had generally been accompanied by her mother, who, I grieve to say, is blind.

"This affliction has necessarily prevented her from keeping that watch over her daughter which is a mother's loving duty, and of this affliction your client's son has taken a base advantage. You speak of the pride of race as affecting Lord Stornedale. We have also that pride, and if we were so far forgetful of the obligations of our faith as to admit your client's son into our family it is upon him and upon Lord Stornedale, not upon us, that honor would have been conferred. Such an alliance will never, with my sanction, be entered into, and I will endeavor to guard my daughter from the peril with which she is threatened."

Mr. Dillworthy, having obtained his point, wisely dropped the subject. He briefly expressed his obligations to Aaron, and rose to take his departure.

Before he reached the door, however, he turned, and in a tone of courteous deference asked if Mr. Cohen could spare him a few moments more.

Aaron assenting, the lawyer resumed his seat, and taking a pocketbook from his pocket, searched in it for a letter.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE SPIRIT OF THE DEAD PAST.

AARON observed him anxiously. The disclosure that had already been made had so unnerved him that he was apprehensive of further trouble.

"Ah, here it is," said the lawyer, opening the letter for which he had been looking. "I was afraid I had left it behind me. Excuse me a moment; I wish to refresh my memory."

He ran his eye over the letter, and nodded as he went through its points of importance.

"Does it concern the unhappy affair we have discussed"? inquired Aaron, unable to restrain his impatience.

"No," replied the lawyer; "I take it that is settled, and I trust, for the sake of both the families, that it will not be reopened."

"I trust not."

"This is quite a different matter, and I hardly know how to excuse myself for troubling you with it. It is a sudden thought, for I came here with no such intention. You must thank your own reputation for it, Mr. Cohen; it is well known that you have never neglected an opportunity to do an act of kindness, and though what I am about to speak of has come to me in the way of business, the story contains elements so roman-

tic and peculiar that it has strangely attracted me. The reference in the letter which induces me to think that you may be able to help me is that you are a gentleman of influence in your community, and have a wide acquaintance with your co-religionists. Perhaps I had better read the words. My correspondent says: "I know that there are peculiar difficulties in the search I intend to make upon my return home, but before my arrival you may be able to discover something which will be of assistance to me. Probably if you consulted some kind-hearted and influential member of the Jewish race you may, through him, obtain a clew; or, failing this, you might employ a Jewish agent to make inquiries." It is a lady who writes to me, and her letter comes from Australia. May I continue? Thank you. Let me tell you the story; it will interest you, and I will be as brief as possible. The letter is too long to read throughout." He handed it to Aaron. "It occupies, you see, fourteen closely written pages, and it is somewhat in the nature of a confession. If you wish I will have a copy of it made, and will send it on to you tomorrow."

Aaron, turning over the pages, came to the superscription: "I remain, yours truly, Mary Gordon."

Truly this was a day of startling surprises to him. He recollected the name as that of the gentleman for whom, twenty years ago, Mr. Moss had undertaken the commission which had lifted him from beggary by placing in his hands a large sum of money, to which in strict justice he was not entitled, but which, from fear that the deception he had practiced might otherwise



be discovered, he had been compelled to accept. He had, as an atonement, expended in secret charities a hundred times the sum, but this did not absolve him from the responsibility. The spirit of the dead past rose before him, and he was overwhelmed with the dread possibilities it brought with it.

"I fear," said the lawyer, "that I have been inconsiderate in introducing the matter at the present moment. I will postpone it to a future occasion."

"Pray continue," said Aaron, whose burning desire now was to know the worst. "I have had an exciting day, but I will pay due attention to what you wish to impart to me."

"I appreciate your kindness. If you cannot yourself assist me you may recommend me to an agent whom I will employ. I see that you referred in the letter to the name of my correspondent, Mrs. Gordon; the inquiry is of a delicate nature, and it may be her wish that her name is not too freely mentioned—at all events for the present. Her story is not an uncommon one, but it takes an extraordinary and unusual turn. She is now, according to her own account, a lady of considerable means; her husband has lately died and she has come into a fortune. Some twenty odd years ago she was a young woman, and had two lovers, one of whom wooed her with dishonorable intentions, and by him she was betrayed. This occurred during the absence in Australia of the gentleman who had proposed to her, and whom she had accepted. He was a resident in Australia, and it was his intention to make his home there. While he was on his way to England, with the intention of making her his wife and return-

ing with her to the colony, she discovered that she was about to become a mother. In despair she fled from London, where he expected to find her, and sought to hide her shame among strangers. The place she selected was Portsmouth, and there she went through a series of harrowing trials, and was reduced to extreme poverty. In her letter to me she makes no effort to disguise the misery into which she was plunged, and she is frank and outspoken in order that I may properly understand how it was that she was forced to abandon the child that was born in Portsmouth under the most distressing circumstances. For it appears that when the suitor who wooed her honorably arrived in London and learned the story of her betrayal he was still desirous to make her his wife. He traced her to Portsmouth, and found her there with her babe, who was then but a few days old. This would have induced most men to forego their honorable intentions, but Mr. Gordon, whose name she now bears, was an exception to the rule, and, through a poor gentleman who acted as a go-between, he made a singular proposition to her. It was to the effect that she should consent to give up her child entirely, and during his lifetime to make no effort to recover it. He undertook to find a respectable and comfortable home for the babe, and to make a liberal provision for it. This is the bare outline of this proposition, and I need not go farther into it. So desperate was her position that she and her child at the time were literally starving; she had not a friend except Mr. Gordon, who was stern in his resolve not to befriend her unless she accepted the conditions he dictated; the gentleman

who acted as a go-between was poor and could not help her.

"In these circumstances she made the sacrifice he demanded, and parted with her child, who from that day to this she has never seen. Mr. Gordon honorably fulfilled the terms of the agreement; a home was found for the child, and he married the lady and took her to Australia, where she has resided for the last twenty years. It was part of the agreement that she should not be informed of the name of the people who adopted the child, and should not, directly or indirectly, make the least endeavor to obtain any information concerning it while her husband was alive. If he died before her she was free to act as she pleased in the matter. This has occurred, and the widow, who has had no children by her marriage, is bent upon recovering her child, who, I may mention, is a girl. The task is beset with difficulties, and may prove hopeless. Shortly stated, Mr. Cohen, this is the case as it at present stands."

"Is there a special reason," inquired Aaron, "for your applying to me for assistance?"

"Not exactly special; it is in a sense accidental, inspired by my visit this evening on the other matter we have spoken of. There are certain particulars in relation to Mrs. Gordon's search for her daughter which I have omitted. The arrangements for the future provision of the babe were carried out, I understand, by a firm of lawyers whose names Mrs. Gordon has been unable to ascertain, but she is acquainted with the name of the gentleman who in Portsmouth conveyed Mr. Gordon's proposition to her. This gentleman is

Dr. Spenlove, who, leaving Portsmouth several years ago, has attained an eminent position in London. You may probably know him."

"He was at my house to-day."

"Then you are on terms of intimacy with him?"

"No. We met to-day for the first time."

"In her letter Mrs. Gordon refers me to Dr. Spenlove, and I have seen him on the subject. But it appears he is bound to secrecy, and he declines, very properly perhaps, to enter into any communication with me on the matter."

"Still you have not explained why you apply to me."

"The explanation is simple. It has somehow come to Mrs. Gordon's knowledge that, after enlisting the services of Dr. Spenlove, her husband employed another agent, who was commissioned to find a home for her child, and that this agent was of the Jewish persuasion. The natural conclusion is that this agent was a resident of Portsmouth, who may or may not have been bound to secrecy in the same manner as Dr. Spenlove. You have friends of your own persuasion everywhere and are probably acquainted with many Portsmouth Jews, through whom this poor lady may gain intelligence of the fate of her child. If you assist me you will earn a mother's gratitude."

"I will consider it," said Aaron, and his voice was troubled; "that is all I can promise at present."

Mr. Dillworthy gave him a kind look and said: "It is not an opportune time to seek your aid in a cause in which you are not personally interested, when another subject, the welfare of a dear daughter, must

naturally engross your attention. Pray forgive me, Mr. Cohen."

Aaron bent his head, and as the lawyer closed the door behind him sank into his chair with a heavy sigh.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### BEFORE ALL, DUTY.

ON this evening many pressing matters claimed his attention, and before Mr. Dillworthy's visit he had intended to devote himself entirely to them.

He took an active part in the dispensing of several Jewish charities, and his personal attendance was necessary to a wise distribution of their funds. Some of these charities were modest in the limited extent of their aims, but they needed care and attention, and his presence was always anxiously looked for by both the administrators and recipients.

Meetings of two of the charities were to be held this evening, and he had promised to preside at both. He must not disappoint them. Before all, duty. That was the thought that came to him—before all, duty, and it was only the iteration of it that brought a true sense of its significance to his mind. Before all, duty, in these public matters—but did it not also apply to private life? And if so, what part in the strict adherence to the axiom did love occupy?

What was his duty here at home in respect of his wife and the girl he had brought up as their daughter? He endeavored to thrust the reflection aside, and drew forth some papers which bore reference to the charities and to another matter of great public

importance which had occupied him for weeks past, and which he was on the point of bringing to a successful conclusion.

He strove now to concentrate his attention upon the papers, for he was to attend a late night meeting at eleven o'clock at which a decision was to be arrived at which was to affect thousands of poor families.

There had been a great strike in the building trade, and vast numbers of men had voluntarily thrown themselves out of employment, and had chosen what was almost next door to starvation in their adherence to a principle. The strike had been brought about chiefly by Aaron's great rival contractor, a Mr. Poynter, an employer of labor on a gigantic scale, and a man as well known as Aaron himself.

To say that these two **were** rivals does not necessarily imply that they were enemies, for that is a game that two must play at, and it was a game in which Aaron played no part. He did not approve of Mr. Poynter's methods—he went no farther than that.

On the other hand, Mr. Poynter hated Aaron with a very sincere and conscientious hate. He hated him because he had lost several profitable contracts which Aaron had obtained, and this hatred may be applied in a general sense because he hated every successful rival, great or small.

He hated him because Aaron was genuinely respected by large bodies of workingmen, and had great influence with them; and this hatred may also be applied in a general sense, because he hated all employers of labor who were held by their workmen in higher respect than himself.

He hated Aaron because he was a Jew, and this may certainly be applied in a general sense, because he had a bitter hatred of all Jews, and would have willingly subscribed liberally and joined in a crusade to hunt them out of the country.

That a Jew could be a good man, that he could be a just man, that he could do anything without an eye to profit or self-aggrandizement—these were monstrous propositions, and no man of sense, certainly no true Christian, could seriously entertain them. Mr. Poynter was a Christian, a true Christian, regular in his attendances at church and fairly liberal also in his charities, though his left hand always knew what his right hand did. And here he found another cause for hating Aaron.

He heard his name quoted as a man of large benevolence, and he went so far as to declare that Aaron's charities were a means to an end.

"He looks upon them as an investment," he said; "they bring him a good return. Did you ever know a Jew part with money without an eye to the main chance?"

When he heard that it was generally reported that Aaron gave away in secret much more than he gave away in public his comment was, "What is easier than to set such a rumor afloat? Any rich man can do it by an expenditure of ten pounds a year. If money is bestowed in secret who is to know of it but the donor? If it becomes public who could have spoken of it first but the donor? No one but a fool would be gulled by so transparent a trick."

These detractions were generally uttered to men



who sympathized with the speaker, and they were not without effect. By which it will be seen that Aaron had enemies, as all men have.

Mr. Poynter posed as a moral man, and it is the very essence of these usurpers of morality that they must stand alone, and that upon their pedestal there shall be no room for any other braggart. He was a married man with sons and daughters and a wife, who all looked upon the husband and father as a pattern.

Whether his children followed the pattern or not does not concern this history, which has to do with the head of the family alone. Whatever a man may be in the prime of life the earlier Adam, if it differ from the later, will very likely assert itself in the blood of his descendants, and this may have been the case with Mr. Poynter's children, despite the respect in which they held him.

You come into contact with a sober-faced man, whose distinguishing mark is one of intense respectability; you see him at home in the bosom of his family, whom he entertains with severely respectable platitudes; you hear his opinions on matters of current interest, a trial, a scandal in high life, tittle-tattle of the stage, the court, the Church, and society in general.

What an intensely respectable gentleman, what severely respectable views, what strict morality, what an estimable father of a family! Ah, but draw the curtain of years aside, and we behold another man—another man, yet still the same: a man about town, philandering, deceiving, lying, and playing the base part to serve his selfish pleasures. Where is the

morality, where the respectability now?—and which of the two is the true man?

Was this the case with Mr. Poynter? The course of events may possibly supply the answer to this question presently. Meanwhile nothing is more certain to-day than that he is accepted as he presents himself. But if in the past life of such a man as Aaron Cohen may be found an episode of his own creating upon which he looks with dismay, why might it not be so with such a man as Mr. Poynter?

Aaron Cohen and he had been acquainted for many years, and at Aaron's hands Mr. Poynter had received mortifications again and again. In a country like England, where operations of magnitude are being continually undertaken, there is room for all who occupy the higher rungs of the ladder; it is only the lower rungs which are overcrowded, and which need clearing by means of emigration to lands where there is room for the toiling, suffering millions. But Mr. Poynter chose to believe that there was not room for Aaron and himself, and he had nursed and fostered an ardent wish to drag Aaron down.

Perhaps it was the knowledge of his own early life that made him think, "If I could find something in his past that would bring shame upon him—if I could only rake up something that would show him in his true light! It would be the commercial and social ruin of him. He would never be able to hold up his head again."

He would gladly have paid for some such discovery.

At the present time he had special reasons for hate. One reason was that the strike in the building trade

was affecting him seriously. He was engaged in large contracts in the carrying out of which some thousands of men were needed, and it was chiefly against himself that the strike was ordered by the unions. He was on the brink of great losses, and Aaron had been called in as a mediator and arbitrator.

The strike at an end he was safe, but every day that it was prolonged meant so many hundreds of pounds out of his pocket. His fate seemed to hang upon the final advice to the men which Aaron was to give, and his profits would be large or small according to the nature of that advice.

He laid the credit of the strike at Aaron's door, for in their enterprises he and Aaron employed different methods. Aaron had pursued in England the course he had pursued in France.

He paid his men liberally, gave them bonuses, even to a certain extent acknowledged them as co-operators. In Mr. Poynter's eyes this was a crime, for it struck at the very root of his prosperity. "He is a socialist," Mr. Poynter said; "men of his stamp are a danger to society."

Another reason was that tenders had lately been called for on works of exceptional magnitude, and he had entertained hopes of obtaining the contract. Again he was worsted by this insidious enemy. Within the last few hours he had heard that Aaron's tender had been accepted. He ground his teeth with rage. He could have undertaken the works in spite of the strike, for he had nearly completed arrangements for the introduction of foreign workmen, whom he was *determined* to employ if the English workers held out.

There would be a row, of course, and the lower classes would cast obloquy upon him, for which he would have to thank his rival enemy. When he heard that he had lost the contract he said to a friend: "I would give half I am worth to drag him down." And he meant what he said, although he probably named a larger percentage than he would be willing to pay.

The last meeting of the strikers was now being held. It had been called for seven o'clock, and it was known that the discussion would occupy several hours. Aaron was not asked to attend this discussion, which was to be private, even the representatives of the press not being admitted.

Eleven o'clock was the hour at which he was expected, and it was understood that he would bring with him certain propositions from the masters, which, with the workmen's views, were to be discussed, and a decision arrived at. To-morrow morning's papers would announce whether the strike was to be continued or was at an end.

He studied the papers before him: the arguments and statements of employers of labor, comparisons of wages here and in foreign countries, the comparative rates of living here and there, documents of every description, among which were pathetic letters from wives of the strikers, imploring him to put an end to the strike.

He had mastered them all, and was familiar with every detail, but he wished to divert his attention for this night from his own private affairs. His mind must be free; he would think of them to-morrow. He had public duties to attend to. Before all, duty.

The words haunted him. He could think only of his beloved wife and of Ruth. Very well. He had half an hour to spare before he left his house for the Jewish meetings; he would devote the time to a consideration of his private duty.

He gathered his papers, arranged them in order, and put them in his pocket. He dallied with them at first, but feeling that he was prolonging the simple task in order to shorten the time for serious thought, he smiled pitifully at his weakness, and completed it expeditiously.

In admitting Ruth into his household, in adopting her as a daughter, he had undertaken a sacred responsibility. He was fully conscious of this twenty years ago in Gosport, and what he had done had been done deliberately.

It was a question then of the sacrifice of a precious life. The doctor had set it clearly before him.

The pregnant words they had exchanged were in his memory now, and might have been spoken only a few moments since.

"Her life," the doctor had said, "hangs upon the life of her child."

"If our child lives," Aaron had asked, "there is hope that my wife will live?"

"A strong hope," the doctor had answered.

"And if our child dies?" asked Aaron.

The doctor answered: "The mother will die."

He recalled the agony of those hours, the sufferings through which Rachel had passed with so much sweetness and patience, his poverty and helplessness, the dark future before him. Then came the ray of light

—Mr. Moss, with the strange commission of the deserted child. He had not courted it, had not invited it, he had had no hand in it. He had regarded it as a message from Heaven.

What followed?

The death of his own babe, the calm and peaceful death, the young soul taken to heaven, his beloved wife in an untroubled sleep by the side of her dead babe. It was a visitation of God. Again, could he be accused of having had a hand in it? Heaven forbid!

On the contrary, who could blame him for believing that it was a divine direction of the course he was to take? And who was wronged? Surely not the mother who had deserted her babe. Surely not the babe, who had found a happy home. The wrong—and herein was the sting—was to Rachel, whose life had been saved by the deceit. So far, then, was he not justified?

But if before the committal of a sin we could see the consequences of the sin—if he had seen the consequences of his—would he not have paused and said: "It rests with God. Let it be as he wills. I will be no party to the deceit"? In that case Rachel's life would have been sacrificed. There was no human doubt of it. Rachel would have died, and the blessings she had shed around her, the good she had been enabled to do, the suffering hearts she had relieved, the light she had brought into despairing homes, would never have been. Against a little evil so much good. Against a slight error so much that was sweet and beautiful.

But in these reflections he had taken into account only Rachel and himself—only their two lives. How about Ruth herself?

He had never disguised from himself that there was much in Ruth's character which was not in accordance with Rachel's views or his own, which she did not assimilate with either of their natures. Being one of his family in the eyes of the world, he had brought her up as a Jewess. She was born a Christian. Was this not a crime of which she had been made the victim? He had experienced great difficulties in her education. He wished to correct the defect which exists in ninety-nine English Jewesses out of a hundred—he wished her to pray in the Hebrew tongue, and to understand her prayers.

To this end he himself had endeavored to teach her to read and translate Hebrew. She would not learn. Even now as a woman she understood but a very few words, and this scanty knowledge was mechanical. A parrot might have learned as much. She had an aversion to Jewish society.

As a child, when she was necessarily in leading strings, she was taken by Rachel to the synagogue on every Sabbath day, but when she began to have intelligent ideas she rebelled; she would not go, and Rachel walked to the house of God alone.

It was a grief to her that Ruth would not follow in her footsteps, and she and Aaron had frequently conversed upon the subject.

"It was so with many Jewish women," Aaron said. "It would be wrong to force her; she will find out her error by and by."

But Ruth never did, and Rachel suffered in silence.

There was another sorrow. Between their son Joseph and Ruth did not exist that love which

brother and sister should bear each other. Joseph was ready with demonstrative affection, but Ruth did not respond. Aaron had taken note of this, but he was powerless to remedy it, and the lad, who was as solicitous as his father to spare the dear mother pain, made no trouble of it.

Ruth respected and admired her reputed father, and in the feelings she entertained toward him there was an element of fear, because of his strength of character, but she did not love him as a child should. He, knowing what he knew, found excuses for her. "It is in her blood," he said to himself.

All this was hidden from Rachel, to whom Ruth was tender and kind. Who could be otherwise to so sweet a woman? But Rachel did not know of what she was deprived until Rose Moss began to make long visits to their home. "Rose is like a daughter to me," she said, and only Aaron was aware of the depth of meaning these simple words conveyed.

But now he had to consider the matter, not from his or Rachel's point of view, but from Ruth's. She was a woman in her springtime, and love had come to her, and she had held out her arms to it. And the man she loved was a Christian.

It was not within his right to take into consideration that the man she loved was a spendthrift and a scapegrace. The question had often intruded itself, since she was grown to womanhood, whether he would not be adding sin to sin by encouraging her to marry a Jew. She had answered the question herself. What right had he to gainsay her? He might, as a true and sincere friend, say to her: "This man will not make



you happy. He has vices and defects which will bring misery upon your home. You must not marry him." But he had no right to say to her: "You must not marry this man, because he is a Christian." It would be a detestable argument for one in his position, and in hers, to advance.

Then Mr. Dillworthy might be wrong in his estimate of the young man's character. The only objection Lord Storndale had to the union was that Ruth was a Jewess. But she was not a Jewess, and it was in his power to go to the young man's father and make the disclosure to him. Lord Storndale's natural reply would be: "Let it be clearly understood. You have done this lady a grievous wrong. You are a wealthy man. Repair the wrong by making a suitable settlement upon her. But it must be publicly done, and the injustice of which you have been guilty must be publicly acknowledged." The only answer he could make would be: "It is just. I will do as you dictate."

What would be the effect as regarded himself? Among his co-religionists he was held up as a pillar of the old Jewish faith. His voice had been raised against apostasy; he had taken a decided stand against the more liberal ideas of civilized life which prevailed and were adopted by a large section of his race.

Even now he was pledged to deliver a public address against the backsliding of the modern Jew, who was disposed to adapt his life to the altered circumstances of the times. He had written his address, and public attention had been drawn to the coming event. His arguments were to himself convincing, and by them he hoped to stem the tide.

He had always been orthodox, and he hoped to prevail against the wave of heterodoxy which was sweeping over modern Judaism. He had stepped forward as a champion. In the light of the duty which properly devolved upon him, how dare he, himself a transgressor, presume to teach his brethren their religious duty? His sound judgment of things which interested or affected him was due to his common sense, which, he had been heard to say, was a rare quality.

"You are always right," Mr. Moss once said to him. "How is it?"

"If I form a correct opinion," he replied, with a smile, "it is because I exercise my common sense. I do not judge from my own standpoint."

He did this now. He put himself in the place of other men. He listened to his own confession. He passed the verdict upon himself.

"This man has been living the life of a hypocrite. He has accepted money for false services. Not in words, but by his acts, he has lied. He has violated the canons of his religion. He has deceived his wife—for money, which he pretends to despise. He has robbed a young girl of her birthright. And he dares to preach to us of duty!"

Who would believe if he told the true story of his hard trial—if he described the bitter tribulation of his soul when his beloved wife was lying at death's door? He had counseled many men in their days of struggle and temptation to be brave and do their duty. How had he performed his in *his* hour of temptation? No one would believe the only story he could plead in extenuation of his sin. He would be condemned by all.

And he was in the zenith of his fame. On this very day, when exposure seemed to be approaching with swift and certain steps, he had been honored as few men lived to be. If he felt pleasure in the position he had won it was because it was a source of pride and pleasure to Rachel. Was he, with his own hand, to destroy the ideal he had created? Was this the plain duty that lay now before him?

"The carriage is at the door, sir."

It was a servant who interrupted his tortured musings. He had given orders to be informed when his carriage was ready. With slow steps he left his study.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### A CHEERFUL DOCTOR.

THERE was an apartment in Aaron Cohen's house which was called the cozy room, where the family were in the habit of sitting when they had no visitors, and it was here that their real domestic happiness reigned. Here Aaron used to smoke his old silver-mounted pipe, and chat with his wife, and indulge in his entertaining pleasantries when he was in the humor, and here the feeling used to steal over him that life would hold more joy for him and those dear to him if they dwelt in a smaller house and his doings were less under the public eye.

"I am convinced," he would say, "that those who are in the lower middle class are the best off. They have fewer cares, they have more time for domestic enjoyment, they can attend without hindrance to their own affairs. There is no happiness in riches. Why do I continue to wish to accumulate more money?"

"Because," Rachel would answer affectionately, "it enables you to contribute to the happiness of others. But I should be as contented if we were poor."

On the occasion of Mr. Dillworthy's visit to Aaron a scene of a different nature was being enacted in the cozy room. Rachel was overpowered with languor, and she fell into a doze. The apartment was large,

but an arrangement of screens and the disposal of the furniture made it look small; domestically speaking, there is no comfort in any but a small room.

Rose during her present visit had noticed with concern that Mrs. Cohen appeared weak, and that her movements, which were always gentle, were more so than usual, and that her quiet ways seemed to be the result of physical prostration. She spoke of it to Rachel, who confessed that she had not felt strong lately, but cautioned Rose to say nothing of it to Aaron.

"He is so easily alarmed about me," she said, "and he has great anxieties upon him."

"But you should see the doctor," urged Rose solicitously.

"I will wait a day or two," answered Rachel, and again enjoined Rose not to alarm her husband.

On the evening of this exciting day she looked so pale and fatigued that she yielded to Rose's solicitations, and without Aaron's knowledge sent for the physician who was in the habit of attending her. While waiting for him she fell asleep in her armchair in the cozy room. At her request Rose played softly some of Rachel's favorite pieces. The piano was behind a screen at one end of the room, and Rose did not know that she had fallen asleep. While thus employed Prissy quietly entered the room. The faithful woman looked at her mistress, and stepped noiselessly to the screen.

"Miss Rose," she whispered.

The girl stopped playing immediately, and came *from behind the screen.*

"Is it the doctor, Prissy?" she asked.

"No, miss."

Prissy pointed to her mistress, and Rose went to the armchair, and adjusted a light shawl which was falling from the sleeping lady's shoulder. It was a slight action, but it was done with so much tenderness that Prissy smiled approvingly. She liked Rose much better than Ruth, who did not hold in her affections the place the other members of the family did. Humble as was her position in the household, she had observed things of which she disapproved.

Ruth was from home more frequently than she considered proper, and had often said to her: "You need not tell my mother that I have gone out unless she asks you."

Prissy had not disobeyed her, and the consequence was that Ruth was sometimes absent from the house for hours without her father or mother being aware of it. Prissy's idea was that her young mistress would bring trouble on the house, but she kept silence, because she would otherwise have got into trouble herself with Ruth, and would also have distressed her dear lady if she had made mention of her suspicions, for which she could have offered no reasonable explanation. Prissy's distress of mind was not lessened because Ruth, when she enjoined secrecy upon her, gave her money, as if to purchase her silence. She would have refused these bribes, but Ruth forced them upon her, and she felt as if she were in a conspiracy to destroy the peace of the family.

"I did not know she was asleep," said Rose, coming back to Prissy.

"I'm sure you didn't, miss. She falls off, you know."

"Yes, I know," said Rose with affectionate solicitude. "What do you want, Prissy?"

"I've got a letter for you, miss."

"I didn't hear the postman."

"The postman didn't bring it, miss," said Prissy, giving her the letter. "A boy. Said immejiet."

"It must be from—no." She was thinking of her lover as she looked at the letter, but she saw it was not his hand. She recognized the writing—it was Ruth's. "The envelope is not very clean, Prissy."

"So I told the boy when he brought it to the back door."

"The back door!" exclaimed Rose, rather bewildered.

"It's curious, isn't it, miss, that it wasn't sent by post?"

"Yes, it is. What did the boy say?"

"It's what I said first, miss. 'You've been and dropped it in the gutter,' I said. But he only laughed and said it was give to him this morning, and that he was to bring it to the servants' entrance and ask for Prissy."

"But why didn't he deliver it this morning?" asked Rose, her bewilderment growing.

"I don't know, miss. He's been playing in the streets all day, I expect. Anyway he said I was to give it you when nobody was looking. It's Miss Ruth's writing, miss."

Rose made no remark upon this, but asked: "Did he say who gave it to him?"

"A young lady he said, miss."

"That will do, Prissy."

"Can I do anything for you, miss?"

"Nothing, thank you."

Prissy gone, Rose looked at the envelope, and saw written in one corner, "Read this when you are alone." Troubled and perplexed, she stood with the letter in her hand, but when the door was opened again and the doctor was announced she put it hastily into her pocket and went forward to meet him.

Dr. Roberts had attended Rachel for some years past, and took the deepest interest in her.

"Sleeping," he said, stepping to her side. He turned to Rose, and questioning her, learned why he had been sent for.

"She falls asleep," he said, with his fingers on Rachel's pulse. "Ah, you are awake," as Rachel sat upright. "Now let us see what is the matter. You are not in pain? No. That's good."

"It is only because Rose was so anxious," said Rachel. "There is really nothing the matter with me, doctor."

"But you feel weak and drowsy at times. We will soon set that right."

Dr. Roberts was one of those cheerful physicians whose bright ways always brightened his patients. "Make the best of a case," was a favorite saying of his, "not the worst."

He remained with Rachel a quarter of an hour, advised her to get to bed, gave her instructions as to food, ordered her a tonic, and took his leave. Rose went with him into the passage.



"There is no danger, doctor?"

"Not the slightest, my dear," he answered in a fatherly manner. "But I would advise perfect rest. Don't tell her anything exciting. She must not be worried. Get a humorous story, and read it to her. Make her laugh. Let everything be bright and cheerful about her. But I need not say that. It always is, eh? If you have any troubles keep them to yourself. But what troubles should a young girl like you have?"

He met Aaron at the street door.

"Ah, Mr. Cohen, I have been to see your wife—in a friendly way."

"She is not ill?" asked Aaron in an anxious tone, stepping back.

"No—a little weak, that is all. Don't go up to see her; I have just left her, and she will think there is something the matter, when there's nothing that cannot be set right in a few days. She wants tone, that is all, and rest, and perfect freedom from excitement. That is essential. Such a day as this, flattering and pleasant as it must have been, is not good for her. Keep her mind at rest, let her hear nothing to disturb her, speak of none but cheerful subjects to her, and she will be herself again in a week. Follow my advice, and there is not the least cause for anxiety."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### RUTH'S SECRET.

DR. ROBERTS' hearty and confident tone carried conviction with it. Aaron's anxiety was dispelled; easier in his mind respecting Rachel's health, he felt like a man reprieved. A few days were still left for reflection, and he went forth to his public duties with a sense of great relief.

Rose, meanwhile, was busy for some time attending to Rachel, who wished the young girl to remain with her till she was asleep. With Ruth's letter in her pocket, which had been delivered almost clandestinely at the house, and which she was enjoined to read when she was alone, she was compelled to bridle her impatience. She did not dare to speak of it to Rachel, and the course the conversation took in the bedroom did not tend to compose her. Rachel spoke only of family matters—of her husband and her children—in which category she included Rose. Presently the conversation drifted entirely to the subject of Ruth.

"Young girls," said Rachel, "confide in each other. There is a true affection between you, is there not, my dear?"

"Yes," replied Rose, wondering what was coming, and dreading it.

"It happens sometimes," continued Rachel, with a

sigh, "that parents do not entirely win their children's confidence. Joseph has not a secret from me. He is happy. Do you think Ruth is quite happy, my dear?"

"I think so," said Rose.

"I am not asking you to break a confidence she may have reposed in you."

Rose could not refrain from interrupting her.

"But, dear mother, I know nothing."

As she uttered the words a guilty feeling stole over her. What did the letter in her pocket contain?

Rachel drew the girl's face to hers, and caressed her.

"Now it is you," she said, "who are speaking as if you are in trouble. I am very inconsiderate, but love has its pains as well as its joys. You have no trouble, Rose?"

"None, dear mother. I am perfectly happy."

"See how mistaken I am; and I hope I am mistaken also about Ruth. I feared that she had a secret which she was concealing from me. Blind people are suspicious, Rose, and breed trouble for themselves and others."

"Not you, dear mother," said Rose, kissing her. "Now you must go to sleep. This is quite against the doctor's orders."

Rachel smiled and yielded; she took pleasure in being led by those she loved.

In the solitude of her chamber Rose read the letter:

"DARLING ROSE: I am in great trouble, and you must help me. You are the only friend I have in the

world—but no, I must not say that; it is not true. What I mean is, you are the only friend at home I can trust.

“Father and mother, and you, too, think I am in Portsmouth with your family. Dear Rose, I am in London—I have been in London all the week. The happiness of my life is in your hands—remember that.

“I went down to Portsmouth, but I only stayed two days. I told your father I had to pay a visit to other friends, and he believed me. And now I hear he is in London and, of course, will come to the house. He is the only person you must tell; you must beg him not to say a word about my going from Portsmouth; you must make him promise; you don't know what depends upon it. Speak to him quietly, and say he must not betray me; he will do anything for you.

“Dear, darling Rose, I have a secret that I cannot disclose yet. I will soon, perhaps to-morrow, perhaps in a week—I cannot fix a time, because it does not depend upon me. But remember my happiness is in your hands. Your loving

“RUTH.”

The young girl was bewildered and distressed by this communication. They had all believed that Ruth was on a visit to Rose's family, and Rose had received letters from her with the Portsmouth postmark on them. It was true that Ruth had asked her, as a particular favor, not to reply to the letters, and though Rose considered it a strange request, she had complied with it. Ruth's stronger will always prevailed with

her. But what did it all mean? If Ruth had been in London a week where was she stopping? Rose's character could hardly as yet be said to be formed; it was sweet, but it lacked decision, and she looked helplessly round as if for guidance. She was glad when Prissy knocked at her door and said that her father was downstairs. Part of the responsibility seemed to be already lifted from her shoulders.

"Prissy," she said before she went down, "you haven't spoken to anyone about the letter?"

"No, miss."

"Don't say anything about it, please. Mrs. Cohen is not well, and the doctor is very particular that she shall not be bothered or worried.

"I won't say anything, miss."

She shook her head gravely as Rose tripped downstairs and muttered:

"Trouble's coming—or my name aint what it is."

"I am so glad you are here, father," said Rose; "I have something to tell you."

"I have something to tell you, Rose," said Mr. Moss. "Such an odd impression! Of course I must be mistaken. But first I want to know how Mrs. Cohen is. I thought she was not looking strong to-day."

Rose told him of the doctor's visit and the instructions he had given, and then handed him Ruth's letter, which he read in pain and surprise.

"I don't like the look of it, Rose," he said. "I hate mystery, and I cannot decide immediately whether it ought to be kept from Mr. Cohen."

"Oh, father!" cried Rose. "Ruth will never forgive me if I betray her."

"I don't think it is the question of a betrayal," said Mr. Moss. "She tells you to speak to me, and you have done so. I take the blame on myself, whatever happens. My dear, you are not old enough to understand such matters, and you must leave this to me. Give me the letter, my dear; it will be better in my keeping than in yours. Just consider, Rose; would you have behaved so?"

"No, father; I could not."

"There is the answer. The odd impression I spoke of was that I saw Ruth to-night in a hansom cab. I thought I was mistaken, but now I am convinced it was she. If I had known what I know now I should have followed her. As for Ruth never forgiving you, what will Mr. Cohen's feelings be toward you when he discovers that you have acted in such a treacherous manner? Ruth is very little older than yourself and, I am afraid, cannot discriminate between right and wrong; she must not be allowed to drag us into a conspiracy against the peace of the family."

Rose was dismayed; she had not looked upon it in that light.

"Was Ruth alone?" she asked in a faltering voice.

"No, she had a gentleman with her. It is a bad business—a bad business. I intended to return to Portsmouth to-morrow, but now I shall remain till the matter is cleared up."

"Shall you do anything to-night, father?"

"No. I shall do nothing till the morning. I must have time to consider how to act. Mr. Cohen will not be home till past midnight, and he will be jaded with the fatigues of the day. To think that it should turn

out so. Good-night, my dear child. Get to bed and try to sleep. It may, after all, turn out better than I expect."

But there was very little sleep for Rose this night, and very little, also, for Mr. Moss or Aaron Cohen. The cloud that was gathering was too ominous for repose.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE HONORABLE PERCY STORNDALE MAKES AN APPEAL.

IT was not the only cloud that threatened Aaron's fortunes and happiness. Others were ready to burst, and in the gathering storm he saw, not too clearly, perhaps, the peril in which he stood. His fair reputation was in danger, the honorable edifice he had built for himself was tottering, the wealth he had amassed was jeopardized by circumstances over which he had no control. In the course of a few days all these things were to happen, and although on the day following that on which so great an honor had been paid to him he did not realize that ruin stared him in the face, he was sufficiently conscious that more than one sword was hanging over his head. But mere worldly misfortune was a trifle in comparison with the stings of his conscience and with a sting as bitter which he learned from the lips of Dr. Roberts. The physician had not been quite ingenuous in his report of Rachel's condition ; his ripe experience scented a crisis which might or might not occur. It did not depend upon him, but upon the patient, and a few hours would decide the extent of the danger. It was this that caused him to call early at the house to see Rachel, and after he had been with her for a quarter of an hour he had a private conversation with Aaron.



"There is no absolute danger," he said, "but I shall be better satisfied if you will send her at once to the seaside. She will be better out of London. I saw on the table a number of letters—begging letters, I was informed—which Miss Rose had been reading to her. She must be free from the emotions created by these appeals and from anything of an agitating nature. Perfect repose and rest—that is what she requires, with brighter sunshine and balmier air. I should recommend Bourniemouth, and if you wish I'll run down and see her there. Meanwhile I will give you the name of a physician who will understand her case as well as I do. Let Miss Rose go with her; your wife is fond of her, and she is a cheerful companion, though she seems to be rather depressed this morning. I have been lecturing the young lady, and she tells me she has had a bad night. It will do them both good."

"I cannot accompany her to-day," said Aaron, "I have so many important matters to attend to. We will go down to-morrow."

"Send her to-day," urged the physician, "and you can follow on to-morrow, or later. It is good weather for traveling; in a few hours it may change. To-day, by all means. We doctors are autocrats, you know, and will not listen to argument. To-day."

Had the business he had to attend to been of less importance Aaron would have put it aside, and traveled with his wife to the seaside, but it was business which imperatively demanded his present attention, and he had no alternative but to send her with Rose and the ever-faithful Prissy, in whom he had every confidence. He accompanied them as far as the

railway station, and held Rachel's hand in his as they drove to Waterloo. It was not only that they were still lovers, but that he felt the need of the moral support which he derived from the tender handclasp.

"Do not be anxious about me, dear," said Rachel, "and do not come down till Friday. Then you can stop till Monday morning, and perhaps Joseph will be home by then, and he can come with you. He will not be able to keep away from Rose, and he has but a short time to remain in England. There is really nothing the matter with me except a little weakness which I shall soon overcome. If Ruth is happy in Portsmouth let her remain there if she wishes. We are growing old, love, you and I, and we must not tie our children too closely to our sides. They will fly away as the young birds do, and make nests of their own. May their homes be as happy as ours has been—may their lives be as happy as you have made mine."

In such-like tender converse the minutes flew by, and as the train steamed out of the station Rachel's face, with a bright smile upon it, was turned toward her husband.

On the road home Aaron telegraphed to Ruth in Portsmouth, addressing his telegram to Mr. Moss' house; he desired her to return to London to-day or to-morrow. He felt that he must speak to her with as little delay as possible respecting the disclosure which Mr. Dillworthy had made to him; it would be playing the coward's part indeed if he did not immediately ascertain the nature of her feelings for the Honorable Percy Stornale. Thus far the first step of his duty; what steps were to follow he had not yet determined upon.

Arriving at his house, he found Mr. Moss waiting to see him. Rose had left a letter for her father acquainting him with their departure for the seaside, and giving him their address in Bournemouth, which she was enabled to do, because Aaron had made arrangements by telegraph for their reception in a Jewish house there. After a few words of explanation of the cause of Rachel and Rose leaving so suddenly, Aaron informed his friend that he had telegraphed to Ruth to come home at once.

Mr. Moss started.

"You sent the telegram to my house?" he said.

"Certainly. I am sorry to break her visit, which she must have enjoyed, but there is a necessity for it. As my oldest friend you should not be kept in ignorance of this necessity, and will agree that it is not to be spoken of outside ourselves without my consent."

Thereupon he related the part of his interview with Mr. Dillworthy that affected Ruth and the son of Lord Stordale.

"There is another matter," he said, "of great importance which was mentioned during the interview, and which we may speak of presently. You now know my reason for sending to Ruth to come home. I must learn the truth from her own lips."

"Strangely enough," said Mr. Moss rather nervously, "I have come to say something about Ruth myself."

"Surely not in connection with this matter?" exclaimed Aaron.

"You must be the judge of that, Cohen. Did you notice whether Rose was looking well?"

"She looked tired. Dr. Roberts said she had passed a bad night, and that the change would do her good."

"A bad night! No wonder, poor child. I scarcely slept an hour with what is on my mind. You will be surprised at what I have to tell you. But first—Rose said nothing about Ruth?"

"Nothing whatever."

"You must not blame her; she acted by my directions, and her lips are sealed."

"Why should I blame her? She is a dear, good child; I have implicit faith and confidence in her. You alarm me, Mr. Moss. Speak plainly, I beg of you."

"Yes, I will do so; but I would have liked to break it gradually. Cohen, Ruth is not in Portsmouth."

"Not in Portsmouth! Where, then?"

"If what she writes and my eyes are to be believed she is in London, and has been here all the week. She remained with us two days, and then left, saying she was going to pay a visit to some other friends. We naturally thought, though we expected her to make a longer stay, that you were aware of it, and that the plan of her visit had been altered with your concurrence. Last night as I passed through Regent Street I saw a lady in a hansom in the company of a gentleman, and I could have sworn it was Ruth; but the cab was driving at a quick pace, and I thought I must have been mistaken. I came on here to Rose, and the poor child was in deep distress. She had received a letter from Ruth, which she gave me to read. I do not offer any excuse for taking the letter

from her; she is but a child, and is quite unfit for a responsibility which, without her consent, was imposed upon her. Here is the letter. It explains itself."

Aaron read it in silence, and with conflicting feelings.

His first thought was that Ruth had taken her fate into her own hands.

He had done his duty jealously by her in the past whatever might be his duty in the present. If, as was his fervent hope, no dishonor to her was involved in her flight—for it was no less than flight and desertion of the home in which she had been reared—if there had been a secret marriage, new contingencies of the future loomed dimly before him, contingencies in which the stern task it was his duty to perform was not so terrible in its import.

The past could never be condoned, but in his consideration of the future one figure towered above all others, the figure of his wife. If for her the suffering could be made less—if the fact of Ruth taking her course without his prompting, even in defiance of the lessons he had endeavored to inculcate, would mitigate the severity of her blow, was it not something to be grateful for?

If, he argued mentally, she and the son of Lord Storndale were married they had little to hope for from the Storndale family.

Their dependence, then, rested upon him, and he resolved that he would not fail the rash couple. His hope of an honorable, though secret, marriage was based upon his knowledge of Ruth's character. She was not given to exaggerated sentiment, he had never

known her go into heroics, she possessed certain sterling qualities of strength and determination. Granted that she was led away by the glamour of wedding the son of a peer, he was convinced she would not so far forget herself as to bring shame upon herself and her connections. She was a Christian born, and she had the right to marry a Christian; by her own unprompted act she had cut the Gordian knot. That the Honorable Percy Storndale had a double motive in pursuing her was likely enough, love, Aaron hoped, being one, the fact of her reputed father being a wealthy man the other. Well, he would fulfill the young man's expectations; there was nothing in the shape of worldly atonement which he was not ready and anxious to make.

In the midst of his musings a servant presented himself with a telegram and a card. The card bore the name of The Hon. Percy Storndale, the telegram was from Mrs. Moss, in Portsmouth.

"Wait outside," Aaron said to the servant, who left the room.

The telegram was to the effect that Ruth was not in Portsmouth, and that Mrs. Moss, in her absence, had taken the liberty of reading the message, under the idea that it might contain something which required an immediate answer. "Is Ruth coming to us again?" Mrs. Moss asked.

Aaron passed the telegram and the card to Mr. Moss.

"Keep in the house," he said, "while I have an interview with this gentleman. Wait in the library, and tell the servant to show Mr. Storndale into this room."

In a few moments the young man was ushered in, and Aaron motioned him to a seat.

It is a human failing to run into extremes. No man is quite so good or bad as he is represented to be by his admirers and detractors. In his anxiety to prejudice Aaron against Lord Storndale's son Mr. Dillworthy had done the young man an injustice. A scapegrace he was, without doubt, but he had been reared into his vices and extravagancies—it may be said with truth carefully reared—and he was certainly no worse than hundreds of other men who are brought up with no definite aim in life, and educated without any sensible and serious effort being made to impress them with life's responsibilities. He had, indeed, the advantage of many, for although he considered it perfectly excusable to get into debt with tradesmen, and to borrow from money lenders without any expectation of being able to pay either one or the other, he would not have descended so low as to pick a pocket or cheat at cards. More of the pigeon than the gull, he looked always to his family to get him out of his scrapes; he believed it to be their duty; and it was upon him, not upon them, that injustice was inflicted when he was thrown entirely upon his own resources, and when he was given to understand that for the future he would have to settle his own liabilities.

He was fair-haired and blue-eyed, and passably good-looking; beyond this there was nothing remarkable in his appearance; but there was that air of good humor and careless ease about him which generally wins favor with women who do not look beneath the surface.

Just now he was manifestly ill at ease, for he had never before been engaged upon a mission so awkward and embarrassing.

That he was impressed by Aaron's dignified manner was evident; he had expected to meet a man of a different stamp.

Each waited for the other to speak, and Aaron was not the first to break the silence.

"I have taken the liberty of visiting you upon a rather delicate matter," said the young gentleman, "and it is more difficult than I anticipated."

"Yes?" said Aaron, and said no more.

The monosyllable was uttered in the form of a half question, and did not lessen the difficulties in the young man's way.

"Yes," he replied, and was at a loss how to continue; but again Aaron did not assist him.

"Upon my honor," he said at length, "I would not undertake to say whether I would rather be in this room than out of it, or out of it than in it."

He gave a weak laugh here, with a half idea that he had said something rather clever, but still he met with no encouragement from Aaron.

"It is so difficult, you see," he added. "I do not suppose you know me."

"No," said Aaron. "I do not know you."

"I thought it possible that your daughter, Miss Cohen, you know, might have mentioned me to you."

"She has never done so."

"It was my fault entirely. I said, on no account; and naturally she gave in."

"Did she wish to mention you to me?"



"Oh, yes, but I insisted. I don't **exactly** know why, but I did, and she gave in. I dare **say** **I was** a block-head, but I hope you will find excuses for me."

"At present I can find none. We shall understand each other if you come to the point."

"I will try to do so, but it is not easy, I assure you, Mr. Cohen, after the way I have behaved. Upon second thoughts I do not see, upon my honor, I do not see how you can be expected to find excuses for me. But it does happen sometimes that a fellow meets another fellow who helps a lame dog over the stile. I am the lame dog, you know."

"It may assist you," said Aaron, "if I ask you one question, and if you frankly answer it. Are you a married man?"

"Upon my soul, sir," exclaimed the Honorable Percy Storndale, "I cannot be sufficiently thankful to you. Yes, sir, I am a married man."

"Long married?"

"Four days, Mr. Cohen."

"Can you show me proof of it?"

"I thank you again, sir. But it wasn't my idea; it was my wife's. 'Take the marriage certificate with you,' she said. She has wonderful ideas."

"Let me see the certificate."

The young man instantly produced it, and Aaron, with a deep-drawn breath of relief, saw recorded there the marriage of Miss Ruth Cohen and the Honorable Percy Storndale.

"You married my—my daughter, I see," said Aaron, "in a registrar's office."

"I don't know how to apologize to you, sir," said

the young man, as relieved by Aaron's calm attitude as Aaron was himself at this proof of an honorable union. "I can't conceive anything meaner, but what could I do? Ruth—Miss Cohen, you know—being a Jewess, could not well have been married in a church, and I, being a Christian, could not well have been married in a synagogue. It was a very delicate point; I am not acquainted with the law on the subject, but no fellow can deny that it was a delicate point. Then there was another difficulty. Bridesmaids, bridesmaids' presents, and general expenses, to say nothing of the publicity, when the parties principally concerned wanted to get it over quietly and quickly. Ruth said you would never consent; I said my family would never consent; so what else was there for it? Pray forgive me if I am expressing myself clumsily."

"Your family did not encourage the match?"

"Dead against it; from the first dead against it. Bullied and threatened me. 'What!' they cried. 'Marry a Jewess!' 'As good as any Christian,' I retorted. But did you ever know a Storndale listen to reason, Mr. Cohen?"

"You are a Storndale," said Aaron quietly.

"Had me there," chuckled the young man. "Gad, sir, you had me there. Well, sir, that is how it stands, and if you show me the door I'll not say I don't deserve it."

"I will not show you the door, but it is not correct to say that is how it stands, as if there were nothing more to explain. Mr. Storndale, if the lady you have married were a Christian would your family have objected?" The young man laughed in a weak, awk-

ward way. "Answer me frankly this and other questions it is my duty to put."

"My family would not have objected," said the Honorable Percy Storndale, "if there had been settlements. You see, sir, we are not exactly rolling in money, and I am a younger son. No expectations, sir. A poor gentleman."

"An imprudent marriage, Mr. Storndale."

"No denying it, sir; and it has only come home to me the last day or two. Marriage in such circumstances pulls a fellow up, you see; makes him reflect, you know. My wife's an angel, and that makes it cut deeper. A married fellow thinks of things. As a bachelor I never thought of to-morrow. I give you my word on it. To-morrow! Hang to-morrow! That was the way of it. I've only just woke up to the fact that there is a to-morrow."

"Was it a love match, Mr. Storndale?"

"On both sides, sir. Without vanity—and I don't deny I've got my share of that—I may speak for her as well as for myself."

"From the first a love match, Mr. Storndale? Did it never occur to you that I was a rich man?"

"You drive me hard, sir, but I'm not going to play fast and loose with you. 'Be prepared, Percy,' Ruth says to me. 'My father is a wise, as well as a just and kind, man, and I don't know whether he will ever forgive me; but you will make a sad mistake if you don't speak the honest truth to him.' The truth it shall be, as I am a gentleman. I did think of Ruth's father being a rich man, and seeing us through it. But after a little while I got so over head and heels in love that

I thought only of her. I give you my word, sir, I never had the feelings for any woman that I have for Ruth, and that, I think, is why I'm rather scared when I think of to-morrow. If I hadn't been afraid of losing her I might have come straight to you, but I didn't care to run the risk. What would you do, sir, for a woman you loved?"

"Everything, anything."

"You would stake everything against nothing, with a certainty of losing, rather than give her up?"

"I would make any earthly sacrifice for her."

"Well, sir, then you know how I feel. I don't set myself up as a good man; I've done many foolish things, and I dare say shall do more foolish things, but not half nor quarter as many with a clever woman by my side to keep me straight. What some of us want, sir, is ballast; I never had it till now, and even now perhaps it's of no use to me. Until a week ago I had to think for one; now I have to think for two. But thinking won't help me through, I'm afraid."

Never before had the Honorable Percy Storndale expressed himself in so manly a fashion; it was as though contact with Aaron were bringing out his best qualities.

"Was it your intention, Mr. Storndale, to come to me so soon after your marriage?"

"I had no settled intention when to come, sir, but I have been forced to it sooner than I expected."

"What has forced you to it?"

"Writs. When needs must, you know, sir."

"Are you heavily in debt?"

"To the tune of three thousand, sir."

"When a question of this kind is asked the answer is generally below the mark."

"True enough, sir, but I am pretty close to it this time. Ruth's an angel, but she's a sensible woman as well. She made me put everything down."

"If I settle the claims against you"—the young man looked up with a flush in his face—"you will get into debt again."

"I'll try not to, sir."

"Honestly, Mr. Storndale."

"Honestly, Mr. Cohen. Ruth will keep me straight."

"Leave me your address. I will come and see you to-night at eight o'clock. Make out a clear and truthful list of your debts; omit nothing. Meanwhile——"

He wrote a check and handed it to the young man, who shook hands with him gratefully, and with a light heart went to gladden his young wife with the good news.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### A DUTY PERFORMED.

BEFORE Mr. Moss rejoined him Aaron had repented of his promise to call and see the young couple in the evening. This vacillation was a proof of the effect recent events had upon his mind; it was really unbalanced; the prompt decision of all matters, whether great or small, which presented themselves for consideration, seemed to have deserted him. He felt that he could not depend upon himself in the promised interview with Ruth, and that he might precipitate a discovery the proper time for which he believed had not yet arrived.

That it would have to be made eventually was certain; truth and justice demanded it, and the claim should be met, but not to-day, not until other plans with respect to his future were settled. For there was growing in his mind a conviction that he was not worthy of the position he held among his co-religionists, that it was his duty to retire into obscurity and not presume to teach what should be done in important issues where he himself had so signally failed. He mentally asked, why had he not recognized this earlier? and the answer that trod upon the heels of the question brought a pitiful smile of self-despise to his lips.

He had been living deliberately in a fool's paradise,

trusting to chance to avoid detection and exposure. He could lay blame upon no other shoulders than his own; he, and he alone, was responsible for the consequences of his acts. Well, he would not shrink from them, he would accept them humbly, and rest his hopes in the mercy of God. If when the hour arrived for open confession—and arrive it must, he knew, before many weeks were past—he could still retain the love of his wife, if she would forgive him for the deception he had practiced, he would be content; he might even be happy again, fallen as he would be from his high estate.

The first duty he had to perform was to lift Ruth and her husband from poverty, to place them in an honorable and independent position, and this task he would ask his friend Mr. Moss to undertake for him.

"All is explained," he said when that gentleman re-entered the room. "Ruth has done what cannot be undone. She and Mr. Storndale are married."

"Married!" exclaimed Mr. Moss. He was startled at the news, but no less startled at the calm voice in which it was communicated to him. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Accept it," replied Aaron, "there is no alternative."

"It is an outrage. He should be made to suffer for it."

"He must not be made to suffer for it, nor must Ruth. The young man is in difficulties, and I have resolved to clear him from them and to provide for their future. They will expect to see me to-night, but I cannot trust myself. I wish you to undertake the task for me, and to carry the whole matter through.

Mr. Moss, all through my life you have been my sincere friend; you will not fail me now?"

"No, Cohen, no; I will do whatever you wish me to do, but it is hardly what I expected of you."

"You are surprised that I do not show anger at this marriage—that I do not express resentment against Mr. Storndale?"

"I am, Cohen."

"Before long," said Aaron, placing his hand on his friend's shoulder, "you will understand why I am so calm. I can trust you, and when I confess that there was in my life an hour when temptation assailed me and I fell before it, I feel that my confidence will be respected until the time arrives when all the world will know what is hidden in my breast—what has been hidden for the last twenty years."

"For the last twenty years! Cohen, that takes us back to the old Gosport days."

"It does. But ask me no questions now, for I am not prepared to answer them. Great changes are coming in my life, and I must arm myself to meet them. If only Rachel will forgive!"

He covered his eyes with his hand, and turned away.

"Cohen," said Mr. Moss presently, "I see that you are unstrung, that you are suffering. You are doing yourself an injustice; I am sure of it, I am sure of it. I do not pretend to understand what it is that distresses you, but I would like to say that you may depend upon me in any difficulty. You may turn against yourself, but you are not going to turn an old friend like me against you."

Aaron pressed Mr. Moss' hand, and explained the



task he wished performed. Mr. Moss was to call upon Ruth and her husband, and obtain from them an honest and faithful account of their position. This done he was to pay every shilling the young man owed; after which a settlement of a thousand pounds a year was to be made upon Ruth as a marriage portion, the money to be absolutely at her own disposal.

"It is not a great deal," said Aaron, "for the son of a peer to live upon, but his family in a little while, when they learn the truth about Ruth"—he paused, and Mr. Moss nodded gravely; a strange suspicion was beginning to haunt him,—"may be disposed to forgive him, and through their influence he may obtain a lucrative appointment. From the way in which he spoke I am disposed to think that he may turn over a new leaf, and that an honorable future may lie before him and Ruth. Give her my love, and say that circumstances render it impossible for me to see her for a few days, and that when we meet I shall have something of great importance to disclose to her. Be patient with me, Mr. Moss. My words point to a mystery which will soon be unraveled. What you are about to do for me can scarcely be finished before the end of the week, but I cannot rest until it is completed. My own affairs will entirely occupy me, and I must run down to Bournemouth to see Rachel."

"I will not waste a moment," said Mr. Moss. "How about the money necessary for the settlement and the payment of Mr. Storndale's debts?"

"It will be placed in your hands to-morrow. Do not return here to-night. Come and breakfast with me at nine in the morning."

Aaron sat up till long past midnight, making calculations and arranging his affairs. He was quite resolved to retire from everything in the shape of public life, and altogether from business; and to effect this there was much to do. He had uncompleted contracts in hand which he would transfer to employers of whose methods he approved, and he had just obtained another which a dozen contractors would be eager to take off his hands. He thought of Mr. Poynter, and shook his head. To such a man he could not trust any of his responsibilities. Then he devoted himself to an examination of his private financial position.

After providing for Ruth he calculated that he could realize a sum of about ninety thousand pounds, in addition to which there were his house and furniture, which would realize another ten thousand. One-third of this should be given to his son Joseph and Rose, one-third should be divided among the Jewish charities, and one-third should be invested for himself and Rachel. This would produce an income amply sufficient for the maintenance of a comfortable home either in London or the country.

"Rachel will be content," he thought, "and the years that are left to us shall be passed in peace, away from the turmoil and fever of life. If she will but forgive me—if she will but forgive!"

All depended upon that.

He held offices of honor in the synagogue, which he would immediately resign. There and then he wrote his letters of resignation. He drew forth the address upon modern Judaism he had undertaken to deliver,

hoping thereby to counteract the loose views of religious obligation which threatened to sap the foundations of the old faith. He read the powerful arguments he had written to this end, and sighed as he read.

"Not for ~~me~~ the task," he murmured. "Not for me. I am not worthy. It is for me to learn, not to teach."

He tore the manuscript and burned it. He had forfeited the right to show his brethren the path of duty.

At length he came to the end of his labors. Before he retired to rest he prayed long and fervently, and offered up supplications for forgiveness.

At nine o'clock in the morning Mr. Moss presented himself, and reported what he had done.

"Everything is in such straight order," he said, "that the whole business can be finished to-morrow."

"It will be a great weight off my mind," said Aaron, "when all the papers are signed. I have letters from Rachel and Rose." He passed the young girl's letter to Mr. Moss. "She says there is no change in Rachel, but that she thinks the air and change of scene are doing her good. If you write to Rose do not hint of any impending trouble, and do not mention Ruth's name, lest Rachel should suspect that something was wrong. I ought to tell you, Mr. Moss, that I have resolved to retire into private life; I shall be much happier, and I am sure Rachel will be. It is a sudden resolution, and I dare say my friends will be surprised, but I am fixed; nothing can make me change my *mind*."

"And your contracts, Cohen?" asked Mr. Moss, who was sufficiently familiar with Aaron's character to know that remonstrance at present would be thrown away.

"I shall transfer them. My earnest wish is that I shall be forgotten, and allowed to live in peace. I am growing old; let my place, which I unworthily hold, be occupied by a better man."

"That is hardly likely to come to pass," said Mr. Moss gravely. "You are not old; you are in the prime of life, with very many years of usefulness before you. But I will not argue with you; when you have recovered from your depression, when Rachel is well again, you will think better of it. We need you; no other man can fill your place. You deliver your address on Sunday, do you not?"

"No."

"But, Cohen, it is expected; it is looked forward to, and the best results are anticipated from it. You will not go from your word?"

"I must. The address is destroyed. I must bear whatever is said of me; I accept it as part of my punishment."

"Of your punishment! I do not understand you."

"You will by and by. Mr. Moss, the man who presumes to set down the laws of right and wrong should be above reproach. Can a thief preach honesty? Can a liar lift his voice in praise of truth?"

"These are strange utterances, Cohen, from your lips."

"There is a sad foundation for them. To know yourself—that is the height of human wisdom; and I

have learned too late. Pray do not continue the subject ; you stand in the dark, I in the light."

"Well, well," said Mr. Moss, with a sigh, "we will speak of this another time. Have you seen the papers this morning?"

"I have not opened them."

"They are full of your praises for putting an end to the strike; they say it is due alone to your character and powerful influence."

"I take no credit to myself. What I did was done with a conscientious motive."

"Good," said Mr. Moss with hearty emphasis. "That is the keynote of your life. Then what have you to reproach yourself with?"

"Let every man search his own heart," replied Aaron, and his voice was very mournful. "He will find the answer there. And now we will waste no more time in idle conversation. We must go to the lawyers and the bank. Have you a list of Mr. Storn-dale's debts? Ah! thank you." He looked at the total, and drew a check for the amount. "The payment of these claims will keep you busy during the day. I will give instructions to the lawyers to prepare the deed of settlement, and to-morrow it can be signed. You will be a trustee; I will call upon a gentleman who will be the other. I shall spend to-night at Bournemouth, and will come back by an early train in the morning."

"Will you not see Ruth before you leave?" asked Mr. Moss.

"No, not till everything is finished. How is she?"

"Well and happy, and overjoyed that you are not

angry with her. Between ourselves, Cohen, it is not what she expected."

"She has all the more reason for contentment. I wish her to be happy."

They had a busy time with lawyers, bank managers, and creditors, and Aaron just managed to catch the two-twenty train for Bournemouth. He passed a quiet evening with Rachel and Rose, and answered the questions put by his wife concerning Ruth in a manner to satisfy her. With Rose he had a private conversation upon the subject, and cautioned her to preserve silence as to the letter she had received. On the following morning he took an early train for London, and arriving before noon, found everything prepared for a final settlement of his plans for Ruth's worldly future. When the deeds were signed, and the consols bought and deposited in the Bank of England, Aaron breathed more freely. He had made some small atonement to Ruth for the deception of which he had been guilty.

"We have had no honeymoon trip," said the Honorable Percy Storndale to him, "and I am thinking of taking Ruth to the Continent to-morrow, but she will be unhappy if she does not see you before we go."

"I will come with you now," said Aaron.

They met and parted without any warm demonstration of affection. Such a demonstration from Ruth toward one whom she believed to be her father, but for whom she had never entertained a strong love, would have been a new feature in her character, and grateful as she was for his generosity, she was held

back by the feeling that she had given him a poor return for his lifelong kindness toward her and by her fear that he was quietly angry with her; while Aaron was held back by the consciousness of his wrongdoing. And so the young couple went forth to commence their new life, and the secret of Ruth's birth was still unrevealed. Aaron had not yet mustered courage to make confession, but he knew that the hour was fast approaching when he would stand in the full light of the sin he had committed through love.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE MOTHER'S APPEAL.

TWO weeks had passed away. Joseph had come and gone. In the company of Rose and his parents he had spent three sad and happy days in Bournemouth—happy because he was in the society of those he loved, sad because he was so soon to part from them. Rachel's health was not improved, the physician said, and those to whom she was so dear were continually warned that she was not to be agitated by news of a distressing nature. The shrewd doctor impressed this upon them the more strongly for the reason that he perceived that a cloud was hanging over their spirits which they were concealing from the sightless lady.

"You cannot be too careful," he said. "A sudden shock might produce serious effects."

They were, therefore, compelled to preserve secrecy, and to invent excuses for Ruth's absence from the family circle. Joseph and Rose had both been informed of Ruth's marriage, and were thus partners with Aaron in the affectionate conspiracy. Aaron had gone no farther with them than this. The vital secret was still in his sole possession.

The carrying out of his intention to retire into private life, and to entirely give up the important



business transactions in which he had been engaged for many years, necessitated his being in London the greater part of these two weeks ; he would have liked to keep his proceedings from public knowledge, but in this he was not successful. One cause of the publicity which was given to his actions lay in the disposal of a portion of his fortune in charity ; his benefactions were heralded far and wide, and he was made the subject of numberless laudatory articles in the newspapers. Another cause was his transference of large contracts, and especially of the last one for which he had successfully competed, to other firms. In the transference of these contracts he had laid down stipulations with respect to wages and hours of labor which, while they did not meet with the full approval of employers, earned for him renewed commendation from the working classes. Mr. Poynter had tried to obtain some of these contracts, but Aaron found him so shifty in his methods that he declined to have anything to do with him. For which defeat Mr. Poynter vowed revenge, and looked about for the means of compassing it.

At the end of the fortnight Aaron was in London, his labors ended, and at this time his fortune amounted to something over thirty thousand pounds, a larger sum than he anticipated would be left to him.

It must be mentioned that Ruth and her husband had just returned to London, as he was informed by letter, in consequence of Ruth's indisposition. It was she who wrote to him, and she was so earnest in the expression of her wish that he would come and see her that he had sent her a telegram saying that he would

call at eight or nine o'clock, by which time he expected to be free.

At six o'clock on this evening he and Mr. Moss were together in Aaron's house, by appointment. Aaron had resolved to reveal his secret to his faithful friend, and he had set apart this evening as a fitting time for the disclosure. On the following day Rachel and Rose were to return to London, as Rachel did not wish to remain any longer in Bournemouth, and Mr. Moss was to return to Portsmouth.

Mr. Moss' face was flushed with excitement as he entered the room with an evening paper in his hand.

"Have you heard the rumor, Cohen?" he asked excitedly.

"What rumor?" inquired Aaron, rising to meet his friend.

"About your bank, the Equitable Alliance?"

"No, I have heard nothing. I have not been out of the house since the morning."

"It came on me like a thunderclap, but it cannot be true."

"What cannot be true, Mr. Moss?" Aaron spoke quite calmly.

"Well, there's nothing definite, but you know there has been something like a panic in the City."

"I know, but it cannot affect me. I have no investments now, with the solitary exception of my bank shares. All my affairs are settled, and the money in the bank until I decide how to invest it."

Mr. Moss groaned. "I wish you had it safely invested in consols. Is all your money there?"

"Every shilling. The only investments I have not realized are the shares I hold in the bank."

"That makes it all the worse. The shareholders are liable to the depositors."

"Yes."

The flush had died out of Mr. Moss' face, which was now white with apprehension. "They're calling it out in the streets—but here's the paper."

He pointed to a paragraph, which stated that one of the largest banks in the City had closed its doors half an hour before its time, and that the panic had in consequence reached an alarming height.

"There is no name mentioned, Mr. Moss."

"No, Cohen, no; but I passed through the City on my way here, and the name of the bank was on everyone's lips. If the bank stops payment to-morrow how will you stand?"

"If it stops payment for sufficient cause," said Aaron in a steady voice, "I shall be a ruined man!"

"Good Heavens! and you can speak of it so calmly!"

"Why not? To work myself into a frenzy will not help me. There are worse misfortunes."

"I cannot imagine them, Cohen. Ruined? Absolutely ruined?"

"Absolutely ruined," said Aaron, with a smile.

"And it was only yesterday that you were——" He could not continue, and Aaron took up his words.

"It is only yesterday that I was on top of the tree. A dangerous height, Mr. Moss, but I must bear the fall. If, when they climb the ladder of fortune, men would but be careful to make the lower rungs secure! But prosperity makes them reckless. Do not look so

mournful. Happiness is as easily found in poverty as in riches."

"It may be, after all, a false alarm," groaned Mr. Moss.

"Let us hope so. We will wait till to-morrow."

"Will you not go into the City now to ascertain whether it is true or false?"

"No; it will only trouble me, and it will not affect the result. I will wait till to-morrow."

So marked was the contrast between his cheerful and Mr. Moss' despondent mood that it really seemed as if it were his friend's fortune that was imperiled instead of his own. He was standing by the door, and hearing a knock, he opened it.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said a servant, "but this gentleman is below, and wants to see Mr. Moss."

Aaron took the card without looking at it, and handed it to Mr. Moss, who exclaimed:

"Dr. Spenlove!"

"Show him up," said Aaron to the servant.

"Had I not better see him alone?" asked Mr. Moss.

"If you have no objection," replied Aaron, "receive him here in my presence."

They both seemed to scent a coming danger, but Aaron appeared to hail it gladly, while Mr. Moss would rather have avoided it.

"A thousand apologies," said Dr. Spenlove to Aaron upon his entrance, "for intruding upon you, but hearing that Mr. Moss was here I took the liberty of following him. My errand is an urgent one."

"I am happy to see you, Dr. Spenlove," Aaron

responded; "if your business with Mr. Moss is not quite private you can speak freely before me."

"I think," said Dr. Spenlove, half hesitating, "that it is quite private."

"I have a distinct reason," continued Aaron as though Dr. Spenlove had not spoken, "for making the suggestion, but men sometimes receive an inspiration for which there is no visible warranty. If it is of an incident in the past you wish to speak, when you and Mr. Moss were acquainted in Portsmouth——"

"How singular that you should have guessed it!" exclaimed Dr. Spenlove. "It is such an incident that brings me here."

"The time was winter," pursued Aaron, "the season an inclement one. I remember it well. For some days the snow had been falling——"

"Yes, yes. It was a terrible season for the poor."

"For one especially, a lady driven into misfortune and who had no friend but a stern and honorable gentleman who would only lift her from the depths into which she had fallen on the condition that she submitted to a cruel sacrifice. His demand was that she should give her infant into the care of strangers, and that only in the event of his death should she be free to seek to know its fate. Is that the incident, Dr. Spenlove?"

"It is. I see you know all, and with Mr. Moss' consent I will speak openly."

Mr. Moss looked at Aaron, who nodded, and Dr. Spenlove continued.

"There is no need to recall all the particulars of that

bitter night when you so kindly assisted me in the search for the unfortunate?"

"None at all," said Mr. Moss; "they are very vivid in my memory."

"And in mine. Your kindness has not been forgotten either by me or by the lady whose life, and whose child's life, were saved by you. He shakes his head in deprecation, Mr. Cohen, but what I say is true. Had he not, out of the kindness of his heart, accompanied me these two hapless human beings would have perished in the snow. I had a motive to serve; he had none. On the night we parted in Portsmouth, Mr. Moss, you were on the point of seeking a home for the poor babe, for whom"—he turned to Aaron—"a liberal provision was made."

"I am acquainted with every detail of the strange story," said Aaron. "I was residing in Gosport at the time."

Dr. Spenlove gave him a startled look.

"It was in Gosport he hoped to find this home, with a friend of whom he spoke in the warmest terms. The commission intrusted to me by Mr. Gordon—I perceive you are familiar with the name—ended on that night, and what remained to be done was in the hands of Mr. Moss and Mr. Gordon's lawyers. The following morning I came to London, where I have resided ever since. From that day until two or three weeks ago Mr. Moss and I have not met. It was here in your house, Mr. Cohen, that, seeing him for the first time after so long an interval, I made inquiries concerning the infant intrusted to him. He informed me that she died very shortly, as I understand, after she

entered her new home. I was not surprised to hear it; the exposure on that bitter night was sufficiently severe to kill a child much older. In order that my visit to Mr. Moss to-night may be properly understood I will briefly relate in a few words the subsequent history of the mother. She married Mr. Gordon and accompanied him to Australia, where she has resided for twenty years. She has had no children by him, and is now a widow, and very wealthy. Unknown to Mr. Gordon she, in her last interview with me, intrusted to me a small iron box—it was one I gave her, and I can identify it—in which she deposited some article of the nature of which I am ignorant. She entreated me to take steps that this box should be delivered to the people who received her child into their home, and to obtain from them a promise that if the child lived till she was twenty-one years of age it was to be handed over to her, or in the event of her child dying, or of herself claiming the box at any future time, to be handed over to her. I informed Mr. Moss of the mother's desire, and he promised that it should be attended to. I have looked through some old papers, and I find that, had the child lived, she would be twenty-one in the course of a couple of months. But the child is dead, and the mother has appealed to me to assist her to obtain the box which she delivered into my charge."

"The mother has appealed to you!" exclaimed Aaron. "In person?"

"In person," replied Dr. Spenlove. "She has returned to England, and is at this moment awaiting me in my carriage below. It is not the only appeal she

has made to me. She is overwhelmed at the news of her child's death, and I have the sincerest pity for her. She desires to know where her child is buried. Mr. Gordon's lawyers, it appears, were so bound to secrecy by their client that they do not feel warranted in giving her any information or assistance. She has communicated with another firm of lawyers in London, who are unable to assist her. As a last resource she has come to me to entreat my aid, which, in the circumstances, I cannot refuse to give her. My errand is now fully explained. Mr. Moss, will you see the poor lady, and give her the information she has a right to demand?"

"I will reply for my friend," said Aaron. "Dr. Spenlove, I was the person to whose care the child was intrusted. The box is in this house, and it is for me to satisfy her. Will you step down and ask her to come up, or shall I send a servant to her?"

"It will be best for me to go," said Dr. Spenlove. "How strangely things turn out! It is fortunate that I came here to seek Mr. Moss."

"I must speak to Mrs. Gordon alone, without witnesses," said Aaron. "You and Mr. Moss will not mind waiting in the adjoining room for a few minutes. The poet's words are true: 'There is a Providence that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we may.' The mother may have cause to bless this night."

He bent his head humbly and solemnly as Dr. Spenlove and Mr. Moss left the room together.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### A MOTHER'S JOY.

FOR the first time in their lives these two beings, whose fates were so strangely linked together, faced each other—the mother who believed her child to be dead, the father who had brought up that child in ignorance of her birthright. It was a solemn moment, more trying to the man who had erred than to the woman who had fallen. To him the truth was as clear as though it were proclaimed with a tongue of fire, to her it had yet to be revealed. How feeble was the human act when brought into juxtaposition with destiny's decree!

Aaron's sin had been ever before him; the handwriting had been ever on the wall. Scarcely for one day during the last twenty years had the voice of conscience been stilled, and it had been part of his punishment that the inherited instincts of the child had worked inexorably against all his efforts; her silent resistance to the lessons he would have inculcated had been too powerful for him; and in the end she had turned resolutely from the path into which, with inward reproaches, he had endeavored to lead her, and had obeyed the promptings of her nature in mapping out her own future.

Keen as was Aaron's sufferings, he experienced a

sense of relief that the bolt had fallen, and that the hour of retribution had arrived; the agony of suspense was over, and he accepted with mournful resignation the decree which ordained that he should pass judgment upon himself.

A difficult task lay before him; the revelation he had to make must be made with tact and delicacy, in consideration for the mother's feelings. Joy, as well as sorrow, has its fears.

Forgetful for the moment of his own domestic grief, a sympathetic pity for the bereaved woman stirred Aaron's heart. Her tribulation was expressed in her face, which was pale with woe; her eyes were suffused with tears; her limbs trembled as she sank into the chair which he placed for her. It was not he alone who was experiencing the tortures of remorse.

Mrs. Gordon was in mourning, and Aaron believed it was for her child. Except that time had left its marks upon her countenance there was but little change in her, and few persons who had known her in her springtime would have failed to recognize her in her middle age.

Her union with Mr. Gordon had not been entirely unhappy; he had performed his duty toward her, as she had done toward him, and though he had a suspicion that, through all the long years, she never lost sight of her secret sorrow, he made no reference to it, and she, on her part, did not intrude it upon him. Even on his deathbed he did not speak of it; she understood him well enough to feel convinced that he would answer no questions she put to him, and she sincerely desired not to distress him, for she

had grown to be grateful for his faithful fulfillment of the promise he had made.

And now she was free, and in the possession of great wealth. But she was alone, without a tie in the world. All her bright dreams had faded. She had indulged the hope that her child still lived, and as she traveled back to England had raised up mental pictures of her daughter which filled her with joy. The information she received from Dr. Spenlove had killed that hope, and her yearning desire was to visit the grave of the babe she had deserted, and to weep over it tears of bitter repentance.

It was not so much now to reclaim the iron box containing the clew to a shameful episode in her youthful life as to learn where her babe was buried, that she wished to learn into whose care her child had been given. There was a time when she nursed a fierce desire for revenge upon the man who had betrayed her, but this desire had burned itself away, and she would be content that the melancholy memories of the past should be buried in oblivion. No good result would accrue from rekindling the smoldering ashes of an experience so sad. She had lived down the shame; no word of reproach had been uttered against her; let the dead past bury its dead.

For a few moments there was silence between her and Aaron, and she was the first to speak.

"Dr. Spenlove has told me all," she said.

"He has told you what he knows," said Aaron, "but you have something more to hear. It was I who undertook the charge of your child. Mr. Moss brought her to me in Gosport, and delivered to me also the box

which you intrusted to Dr. Spenlove. I hand you now the box in the same condition as it was handed to me. You will oblige me by convincing yourself that it has not been tampered with."

She unlocked the box with a key she carried in her purse, and taking from it the half of the letter she had deposited therein, glanced over it with a bitter smile, then replaced it in its hiding place and relocked the box.

"There was nothing else in it?" asked Aaron.

"Nothing else," she replied; "it is as I delivered it to Dr. Spenlove. Tell me about my child. Did she live long? Was she buried in Gosport? You will tell me the truth—you will conceal nothing from me?"

"I will tell you the truth; I will conceal nothing from you; but what I have to say must be said in my own way. When Mr. Moss left your child with me there were two babes in my house of the same age, and we were in deep poverty and distress. My wife—my beloved wife lay at the point of death——" He covered his eyes with his hands. "Bear with me; these recollections overcome me." Presently he resumed. "But a short time before her confinement she had been stricken with blindness. Her own child, whose face she had never seen, lay quiet and still in her arms. The doctor who attended her feared the worst, and said her life depended upon the life of her babe. If our child died on the morrow the mother would die; if our child lived the mother would live. How can I expect you to forgive me for what I did in the agony of my heart?"

Again he paused, and tears gushed from his eyes.

Mrs. Gordon sank back in her chair; there was not a vestige of color in her face.

"My God! my God!" she murmured. "Have I not suffered enough?"

These words recalled him to himself. He begged her to have courage, to be strong; there was no new suffering in store for her, he said; what he had to relate would bring joy into her life. He gave her wine, and when she had recovered he proceeded with his story, and gradually and tenderly revealed to her the truth. As he proceeded her face shone with incredulous joy, her heart beat tumultuously with the prospect of this unexpected happiness; and when his story was finished, and he sat before her with bowed head, there was a long, long silence in the room. He dared utter no further words; in silent dread he waited for his condemnation.

He felt a hand upon his knee, and looking down, he saw her kneeling at his feet. She was transfigured; the long pent up love of a mother made her young again; she took his hand, and kissed it again and again, bedewing it with happy tears. He gazed at her in wonder. He had expected revilings and she was all tenderness.

"Is it true?" she murmured. "Oh, is it true?"

"It is the solemn truth," he answered.

"And my child lives?"

"She lives."

"God in heaven bless you! She lives—my daughter lives!"

"And you do not blame me—you do not reproach me?"

"I shall bless you to my dying day! Oh, my heart, my heart! It will burst with happiness."

He entreated her to be composed, and in a little while she was calmer. Then for the first time he wrested himself from the environment of his own selfish sorrows; he put himself in her place, and understood the sacred joy which animated her. She was all impatience to see her child, but Aaron bade her restrain her impatience; he had much more to relate, which it was necessary she should hear.

"But I must see her to-night!" she cried.

"You shall see her to-night. I will take you to her."

She was fain to be satisfied with this assurance, but she would not be content till she saw a portrait of Ruth.

He gave her a cabinet photograph, and she gazed at it longingly, yearningly.

"She is beautiful, beautiful!"

"Yes, she is a beautiful girl," said Aaron, and then proceeded with the story, saying nothing, however, of what he had done for the young couple. At first she was grieved to hear that Ruth was married, but she found some consolation in the reflection that she had married into a peer's family. When Aaron related the particulars of the lawyer's visit to him, commissioned by Lord Storndale because of his stern objection to his son marrying a Jewess, she exclaimed: "But Ruth is not a Jewess!" and was appalled by the thought that her daughter was not born in wedlock. A child of shame! How would she be received? It was her turn now to fear, and Aaron,

whose native shrewdness had returned to him, divined her fear ; but it was not for him to moot the subject.

"My child," she said, with hot blushes on her face, "believes herself to be your daughter?"

"She does. It was my intention to undeceive her to-night."

"You know my story?"

"It was imparted to me," he replied, with averted head, "when I was asked to receive your child."

"Who knows the truth," she asked, trembling and hesitating, "about me?"

"I, Mr. Moss, Dr. Spenlove, and your husband's lawyers."

"No other persons?"

"No other persons." He took her hand. "Dear lady, from my heart I pity and sympathize with you. If I can assist you in any way——"

"You can—you can!" she cried. "For God's sake do not destroy the happiness that may be mine!"

"As Heaven is my judge, no word shall pass my lips. Be comforted, be comforted. The lawyers' lips are sealed, as you have already learned, and I will answer for Mr. Moss and Dr. Spenlove. Say to her and to her husband's family what you will—it will be justified. Your secret is safe."

She thanked him humbly and gratefully ; it was she who was abashed ; it was she who had to implore for mercy ; and it was due to his wisdom that her aching heart was eased.

"If I can repay you—if I can repay you!" she murmured.

"You can repay me by saying you forgive me for the sin I committed."

"Your sin!" she cried in amazement. "You, who have brought up my child in virtue and honor! At my door lies the sin, not at yours."

"You forget," he groaned; "my wife, whom I love with a love dearer than life itself, has yet to receive the confession I have made to you. It was my love for her that led me into the error."

"An error," said Mrs. Gordon in tender accents, "that has saved a daughter from regarding her mother with abhorrence. Dear friend, God sees and judges, and surely he will approve what you have done. A grateful mother blesses you!"

"Remain here," said Aaron. "I will speak to my friends and yours, and then I will conduct you to your daughter."



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### A PANIC IN THE CITY.

ON the following morning Aaron was up earlier than usual, and in the daily papers he read the confirmation of the intelligence which Mr. Moss had imparted to him. There was a panic in the City, and fortunes were already being won and lost. The bank in which his money was deposited, and in which he held a large number of shares, was tottering, and he knew that he was ruined if it could not weather the storm.

Mr. Moss found him reading the news over his breakfast table. Business, as we know, had not prospered with Mr. Moss of late years; his investments had turned out badly, and he was in low water himself. He had placed his dependence upon Aaron to pull him through, and the rock he had depended upon was crumbling away.

"You are in trouble, Mr. Moss," said Aaron as his friend made his appearance.

"I have the second edition of the morning papers," replied Mr. Moss with a white face. "The Stock Exchange is in a blaze."

"Rather early to commence business," observed Aaron calmly; "the outlook is not improving, I suppose?"

"Everything is going to the dogs, Cohen."

"Have you breakfasted?" asked Aaron.

"Had breakfast at seven o'clock. Couldn't sleep a wink all night."

"Why?"

"Why!" exclaimed Mr. Moss. "What a question to ask when ruin stares a man in the face."

"I hope," said Aaron gravely, "that you are not deeply involved."

"I am up to my neck. But what is my position compared with yours? Cohen, you are a mystery."

"Because I accept the inevitable. Can you show me how I can improve matters?"

"No, I can't," answered Mr. Moss, with a deep groan; "only if I had capital I could make a fortune."

"How?"

"By joining the bears. Cohen, there is a chance for you. Your credit is good. There is nothing for it but a plunge. It will set you right."

"How if it goes the other way, Mr. Moss?"

"You will be no worse off than a thousand men who are plunging."

"The majority of whom, before another sun rises, will find themselves disgraced. No, Mr. Moss, no. I have never dabbled in stocks and shares at the risk of my good name, and I never will. There is but one way to meet misfortune, and that is the straight way. We will go to the City, and ascertain, if we can, exactly how matters stand. Rachel and Rose do not return from Bournemouth till the afternoon."<sup>1</sup>

In the City they learned the worst, and Aaron realized that he was beggared.

"Can you save nothing from the wreck?" asked Mr. Moss.

"Nothing," replied Aaron. "It may be that all I possess may not be sufficient to clear me. I think you had better take Rose back with you to Portsmouth; you have been absent from your business too long."

"I must go this evening," said Mr. Moss, "but Rose can stay. She will be a comfort to Mrs. Cohen."

"No, take her with you. In this crisis Rachel, I know, would prefer to be alone with me. Besides," he added, with a sad smile, "I have to provide another home, and I must be careful of my shillings."

"Another home, Cohen. What do you mean?"

"With certain ruin staring me in the face, and with claims coming upon me which I may not be able to meet, I must begin immediately to retrench. Our establishment is an expensive one, and I dare not carry it on a day longer than is necessary. Rachel and I will sleep in the house to-night for the last time. To-morrow I will pay off the servants, and we shall move into humbler quarters. So tumble down all our grand castles. Well, it has happened to better men, who, after years of toil, have to begin life over again. Rachel will not mind; we have faced poverty before to-day, and will face it again cheerfully."

"It drives me wild to hear you speak like that!" exclaimed Mr. Moss. "You are looking only on the black side. If you had the money you have got rid of the last two or three weeks——"

"Hush! Mr. Moss, hush!" said Aaron, interrupting him. "It is a consolation to me to know that the greater part of my legitimately earned fortune has been so well bestowed. I am glad I did not wait to

make reparation for the great error of my life. Rachel has yet to hear my confession. If I obtain her forgiveness I can face the future bravely and cheerfully."

Under the seal of confidence Aaron had made Mr. Moss and Dr. Spenlove acquainted with the particulars of the story of the two babes and of the deception he had practiced in his home in Gosport. Mr. Moss was not greatly astonished, for the hints lately dropped by his friend had prepared him for some disclosure of a strange nature.

"Besides," he said inwardly to himself, "Ruth bears no likeness to either Mr. or Mrs. Cohen. How blind we have all been!"

In his weak moments Mr. Moss was rather inclined to be wise after the event. Both he and Dr. Spenlove had pledged themselves to secrecy, but when they proceeded to justify Aaron for the act he stopped them, saying it was a matter between him and his conscience. Now on this disastrous morning, as they walked from the City, Mr. Moss asked Aaron whether he intended to tell his wife to-day.

"Not to-day," Aaron answered. "I must bide my time. The news that we are poor will be as much as Rachel can bear.

## CHAPTER XL.

### "CAN YOU FORGIVE ME?"

ON the evening of the same day Aaron and Rachel were alone in their house in Prince's Gate. Rose had taken her leave of them, and she and her father were traveling to Portsmouth, Mr. Moss with a heavy heart; he was older than Aaron, and was not so courageous in the hour of adversity.

"What makes you so melancholy, father?" said Rose.

"When you reach my age, Rose," he replied, "I hope you will not discover that life is a dream."

The remark seemed to him rather fine and philosophical, but had he been asked to explain its precise meaning he would have found it difficult.

"I hope I shall, father," said Rose as she leaned back and thought of her lover; "a happy dream."

"I am glad to get back to you and to our dear home," Rachel was saying to her husband at the same moment. "You must never send me away again. Indeed, dear Aaron, if you intend it I shall for once in my life be rebellious, and shall refuse to go."

She spoke tenderly and playfully, and held his hand in hers, as in the olden days.

"Nevertheless, my love, your short visit to the seaside has done you good."

"Yes, dear, I am almost well ; I feel much stronger."

"There is the justification," said Aaron. "I am not happy away from you, but there are occasions when it is our duty to make sacrifices. This is the longest separation there has been between us in the twenty-six years of our married life."

"How time has flown!" she mused. "Twenty-six years of happiness. It has always been the same, dear husband, whether we were poor or rich, I cannot recall a day in the past without its flower which money could not purchase."

"You make my task easier, Rachel," said Aaron. "I have something to disclose to you."

"And it is not good news, love," she said in a tone of much sweetness.

"It is not good news, Rachel. By what means have you divined that?"

"I see without eyes. In the early days of my blindness I used to tell you that I was acquiring new senses. It is true. Some accent in your voice, the touch of your hand, conveys the message to my mind, and I wait in patience, as I am waiting now. Aaron, my dear husband, I have known for some time past that you have a sorrow which one day you will ask me to share. How have I known it? I cannot tell, but it is clear to me. You have not had a joy in your life apart from me. It is my right, is it not, to share your sorrows?"

"It is your right, Rachel, and you shall share them. I have not been without my errors; once in the past my footsteps strayed, but in the straying I inflicted suffering upon no human being."

"Of that I am sure, my love. It is human to err, but it is not in your nature to inflict suffering or commit an injustice. I am not pressing you to confide in me before, in your judgment, the proper time arrives. Nothing can shake my faith and trust in you."

He regarded her in silence a while. The turn the conversation had taken favored the disclosure of his secret respecting Ruth, but he feared to speak of that and of his ruin in the same hour. The latter was the more imperative, because it demanded immediate action, and he resolved to confine himself to it on this evening.

"Your loving instinct, Rachel, has not misled you. I have a secret which I have concealed from you."

"Fearing to give me pain, dear husband."

"Yes; and fearing that it would disturb the faith you have in me. I place so high a value upon it that my life would be dark indeed were I to lose it."

"That is impossible, dear. Banish the fear from your mind. Were the hands of all men raised against you I would stand before you as your shield, and they would not dare to strike. So long as you are by my side I am happy and content."

"Dear life of my life, you inspire me with hope. But one secret which oppresses me cannot be divulged to-night. It is of my worldly troubles I must speak now; the rest shall follow at a more fitting time. Rachel, for twenty years Heaven has showered prosperity upon me; all my undertakings have succeeded, and I have heard it said, 'Everything Aaron Cohen touches turns to gold.' It really has been so. I accumulated a large fortune, and—with humbleness

I say it—no man, however high or low his station, was the loser by it. But a breath may destroy what the labors of a lifetime have created. If such a reverse has come to me, Rachel, how would you accept it?"

"Without murmuring, love," she said, drawing him close to her, and kissing his lips. "I should have but one regret—that I could not work for you as you have worked for me. But that, also, is God's will, and I have never repined. Who would presume to question his wisdom? His name be praised forever and ever."

"Amen! In our old home in Gosport you were happy."

"I have never been happier, Aaron. I have sometimes felt pride in your successes, but surely that is pardonable. Love is the most precious gift that life can bestow. All else is nought. It is our soul life and dies not with the body."

"You do not value money, Rachel?"

"For the good it may do to others, not for the good it can do to the possessor; for the suffering it may be made the means of relieving, for the blessings it may bring into the lives of the afflicted and unfortunate. Then it becomes Godlike, and when so used the angels smile approval."

"Dear love, you lighten my burden. When I won you my life was blessed. Listen, Rachel. This is a dark day for many men who find themselves fallen from their high estate. Despair sits in many homes at this hour."

"But not in ours, Aaron, whatever has happened."

"Thank God! It is my happy belief that this hour is not dark for us. It was my intention, Rachel, to



retire altogether from business and public life, and to that end I took advantage of your absence from London to settle my affairs. My resolution was prompted by the secret, the burden of which, although I have not yet disclosed it to you, you have made it lighter for me to bear. Brought to public knowledge, which I fear its peculiar nature will render inevitable, it will be immediately said that I am unfitted to retain my position as a leader and teacher. To tarry until that judgment was pronounced would be to aggravate the disaster, and I resolved to anticipate the verdict by resigning the honors which have been conferred upon me. I have done so, and I have withstood the pressure that has been put upon me to withdraw my resignation. An examination of my worldly affairs resulted in my finding myself in possession of nearly a hundred thousand pounds. I divided this into three portions, one of which I intended to retain in order that we might pass what years of life remained to us in comfort; the second portion I devoted to charity, and it has thus been distributed; the third portion was devoted to repairing to some extent the error of which I had been guilty."

He looked at Rachel after he had uttered these words, which he had spoken with averted head. There was no change in her. Sweetness and sympathy were expressed in her beautiful face, and it seemed as if her soul's light dwelt thereon.

"Do you approve, Rachel?"

"Entirely, love. Let me hold your hand."

He continued. "The money I intended for our private use was lodged in a City bank, and in this bank

I hold shares for which I am liable to the depositors. Yesterday Mr. Moss brought me news of a commercial crisis in which I discerned——"

"Go on, dear husband, I am prepared for the worst."

"In which I discerned my ruin. This morning I convinced myself that the news was true."

"And we are poor again," said Rachel in a gentle voice.

"And we are poor again. Everything is lost. I do not know the extent of my liabilities upon the shares I hold in the bank, but it is certain that my property in this house and what it contains will scarcely be sufficient to meet them. I have nothing more to tell of my worldly trouble, Rachel."

"Dear love," said Rachel sweetly, with her arms around him, "it is a small trouble, and we will meet it bravely. With all my heart and soul I will help you to meet it. We cannot remain in the house; the expenses are too great."

"You echo my own words, Rachel. I have already discharged the servants, and have paid what is due to them. To-morrow they take their departure, and we must be content to move into humbler quarters."

"I am content," said Rachel. "I am happy. We have each other. What does Prissy say?"

"She will not leave us. With or without my consent, she insists upon sharing our poverty."

"Dear, faithful girl! Let it be as she wishes, love. I know her constant, devoted nature. She will be a comfort to both of us."

She paused before she spoke again, and then it was in a voice trembling with emotion.

"We commence a new life to-morrow. O Aaron, dear husband, my heart is aching, not because we are poor, not for myself, but for you, love, for you! Aaron, you have said nothing of Ruth. Let this night end your sorrows, and let me share them now. It is the thought of Ruth that oppresses you. I feel it, I have known it long, but did not dare to mention it. Give me all your confidence; I am well, I am strong. There is nothing I cannot bear for your dear sake."

He could not resist the appeal. In a voice as tremulous as her own he made confession of his sin, and not for one moment while he spoke would she relinquish his hand. And when his confession was ended she held him close in her embrace and mingled her tears with his.

"Can you forgive me, Rachel?"

"It is for me to bless, not to forgive," she sobbed. "For me you strayed, for me you have suffered. Comfort his bruised heart, O God, who sees and judges! And, Aaron, dear and honored husband, we have still a son to bless our days!"

## CHAPTER XLI.

### A POISONED ARROW.

HAD it not been that public attention was mainly directed to events of greater importance, Aaron Cohen's affairs would have furnished a tempting theme for the busy hunters of sensational and personal journalism, but to a certain extent he was protected by the fever of the financial panic in which men of a higher station were brought down low, and the fortunes of famous historic houses imperiled. He would have been grateful to slip into obscurity entirely without notice, but this could scarcely be expected.

He had one bitter enemy—Mr. Poynter—who rejoiced in his downfall, and who neglected no opportunity to wing a poisoned arrow against his old rival. When the excitement of the panic was over these arrows became more numerous, and Aaron's name was frequently mentioned in a slighting manner in those second- and third-class journals whose columns are too freely open to personal spite and malice. He saw but few of the paragraphs in which he was attacked, and they did not wound him; some of his friends—for he was not deserted by all—urged him to reply to them, but he shook his head and said:

"I am content. Lives there a man without enemies?"

His chief concern was that the slanders should not reach Rachel's knowledge, and here her blindness aided him. Either he or the faithful Prissy was ever by her side, and if his traducers hoped to make him suffer through the being whose love was the most precious jewel in his life they were doomed to disappointment.

Perhaps Aaron had never been happier than he was during these dark days of adversity. The weight of a secret sin was lifted from his heart, and he had no fears of poverty.

He had full confidence in his being able to obtain some employment which would keep the wolf from the door; however lowly it might be, he was ready to accept it thankfully.

He was not immediately free to enter a situation, for much of his time was occupied in settling his affairs.

He had left his home in Prince's Gate, and was living in lodgings in Brixton. Everything he had in the world was given up to the creditors at the bank, and when he quitted the house neither he nor Rachel had taken from it anything of the slightest value. Small personal gifts which had been given by one to the other, articles of dress which they might legitimately have retained, mementoes of little value endeared to them by some affectionate association, even the old silver-mounted pipe—all were left behind. Simply dressed, without a piece of jewelry about them, they turned their faces toward the new home and the new life without a murmur, and walked to their humble rooms with contented hearts.

Prissy, who had gone before to get the place ready,

received them with a smiling face. Grandeur was nothing to Prissy so long as she could be with those whom she loved to serve. As happy in a cottage as in a palace, she proved herself to be a true philosopher, accepting fortune's rubs with equanimity, and making the best of them with a cheerful willingness it were well for loftier folk to emulate. The rooms were sweet and clean, there were flowers about, and blooming flowers in pots on the window-sill. Rachel sighed with pleasure as she entered, and her bright face was Prissy's reward.

"Where did the flowers come from, Prissy?" asked Aaron when Rachel was out of hearing.

"From the flowerman, sir," she answered. "They cost next to nothing, and they're paid for."

"But, Prissy——"

"Please don't, sir," she interrupted, and there were tears in her eyes and a pleading rebellion in her voice. "I know what you're going to say, Mr. Cohen, but please don't. You'd like me to keep good, wouldn't you, sir?"

"Why, of course, Prissy," said Aaron, astonished at the question.

"I can't keep good, sir, if you blow me up now you're in misfortune; I can't keep good if you don't let me have my way in little things. I'll be very careful, I will, indeed, Mr. Cohen. It's the first time in my life I've bought any flowers at all—and did you see, sir, how happy missus looked when she came in?"

Thus inconsequentially Prissy, mixing her arguments in the strangest manner.

"But, my good girl," said Aaron kindly, "you have

no business to waste your money; you must think of your future."

"It's what I am thinking of, sir; I don't want to grow wicked, and flowers are the only things that will prevent me. Mr. Cohen, if it hadn't been for you I shouldn't have been no good at all. I don't forget the first night I come to you with Victoria Regina in Gosport; if I lived to be as old as Methusalem I couldn't never forget it. And then when missus got me the gillard water to bathe my eyes—I should be the ungrate-fullest woman that ever drew breath if I could forget those things. Do, please, sir, let me have my way. You've paid me a lot more wages than I was worth, and all my money is in the Post-office Savings Bank, and it aint mine at all, it's yours——"

"My good Prissy," said Aaron, much affected, for Prissy could not continue, her voice was so full of tears, "do as you wish, but be very careful, as you have promised. Perhaps fortune will turn again, and then——"

"And then, sir," said Prissy, taking up her words, "you shall give it all back to me. And it will turn, sir; you see if it won't!"

Aaron was very busy for several days after this, making a careful inventory of his possessions in the house in Prince's Gate, which he sent to the appointed liquidators of the bankrupt bank. Of all the debtors he was the only one who did not wait for the law's decree to give up his fortune, to the last farthing, and perhaps he was the only one whose conscience was free of the intention of wrong.

He had his gleams of sunshine. First, as ill news

travel fast, his son, Joseph, upon his arrival in Australia, was made acquainted through the public journals of the condition of affairs, and divining that his father was in need of money he cabled home advices which assisted Aaron in his extreme need. The young man had saved some money, and he placed it all at the disposal of his parents, who derived an exquisite pleasure from this proof of affection.

As in Gosport twenty years before, Rachel did not know the stress to which her husband was put. He kept from her knowledge everything of a distressing nature, and in this loving task he was silently assisted by Prissy, whose thoughtfulness and devotion were not to be excelled. She watched her mistress' every movement and anticipated her slightest wish.

"What should I do without you, Prissy?" said Rachel.

"I hope you'll never want to do without me, ma'am," answered Prissy.

Another gleam of sunshine came to him in the offer of a situation from a merchant who had known him in his days of prosperity. He was not asked to occupy a position of responsibility, and the offer was conveyed to him in apologetic terms.

"I cannot displace men who have been long in my employ," the merchant said, "but a desk is vacant which you can have if you think it worthy of you."

Aaron accepted it gladly and expressed his thanks.

"Fortune has not deserted us," he said to his wife. "I shall not only be able to pay our expenses, but I shall even be able to save a little. The hours are



short, the labor is light; and in time I may rise to something better."

So, like a young man commencing life, he went every morning to his new duties, and returned in the evening to a peaceful and happy home.

During all this time he had heard no word of Ruth or Mrs. Gordon, and the sin of which he had been guilty had not reached the public ear. His house and furniture still remained unsold, law's process being proverbially slow and tedious. At length, passing his house one evening he saw bills up announcing that the mansion and its contents were to be sold by auction in the course of a week. It was his intention to attend the auction for the purpose of purchasing a few small mementoes, toward which he had saved two or three pounds. The sale was to take place on Thursday, and on Wednesday night he was looking through the catalogue, and talking with Rachel about his intended purchases.

"There are dumb memorials, dear," he said, "which from long association become almost like living friends. I shall not be quite happy till I get back my silver-mounted pipe. Tobacco has lost its flavor since I left it behind me, but I had no right to bring away anything of value, and I have always looked forward to possessing it again. Great misfortunes are easy to bear in comparison with such-like trifles."

Aaron seldom indulged now in those touches of humor to which Rachel in the old days loved to listen. The Aaron of to-day and the Aaron of yesterday were the same in everything but that; the tender gayety was replaced by a tender sadness, and Rachel often thought

with regret of the play of fancy which used to stir her to mirth.

On this night they expected a visit from Mr. Moss, who was coming to London on business, and at about nine o'clock he made his appearance. An hour afterward Rachel retired to bed, and left the friends together. Aaron had observed that Mr. Moss looked anxious and uneasy, and being now alone with him he inquired the reason.

"I expected you to tell me of it," said Mr. Moss.

"Of what?" asked Aaron. "I hope there is no fresh trouble."

"I am the harbinger of it, it seems," groaned Mr. Moss. "I was the first to bring you the news of the panic, and now——"

"Yes," said Aaron gently, "and now? Speak low, or Rachel may overhear us."

"You do not see many papers, Cohen?"

"Not many."

"I hardly like to tell you," said Mr. Moss, "but you will be sure to hear of it to-morrow. They never spare a man who is down. For God's sake, Cohen, don't blame me; I've never opened my lips—I'd have cut my tongue out first."

"Let me know the worst," said Aaron. "It relates to me, I see. As for blaming you, set your mind at ease. You have been too good a friend to me to do anything to distress me. Come, shake hands. Whatever it is I can bear it like a man, I hope. I have passed through the fire."

In silence Mr. Moss took a newspaper from his pocket, and handed it to Aaron. It was folded in a

particular place, and there Aaron read an article, headed "A Strange Revelation," in which the whole story of his sin was circumstantially detailed. He was not referred to by name, nor was Ruth's name, or Mrs. Gordon's, mentioned, but the name of the place in which the incident occurred, and the year of the occurrence, were accurately set down, and certain allusions to himself could not be mistaken. He was spoken of as a Jew who until lately had occupied an eminent position in society, who had posed as a friend of the workingman, and had been instrumental in putting an end to the late great strike in the building trade.

"Ostensibly this may be said to have been of service to society, but in our judgment of the man's character such an issue must be set aside. The question of motive has to be considered ; if it be worthy it reflects credit upon him, if unworthy it passes to his dishonor."

From this argument was drawn the conclusion that there was not a public act performed by "the eminent Jew" that was not undertaken with a view to self-interest. For years he had been successful in throwing dust into the eyes of the multitude whom he had cajoled into sounding his praises, but at length the sword had fallen, and the life of duplicity he had led both publicly and privately was laid bare to view. His charities were so many advertisements, and were undoubtedly turned to profit ; his religious professions, unceasingly paraded, served as a cloak for his greed and self-seeking.

"This man's life of hypocrisy points a moral. He

was in affluence, he is in want; he was a leader, he has become a drudge. We hold him up as a warning."

Then followed a promise of further revelations to be furnished by a competent authority, and probably by the publication of the delinquent's name for the benefit of society at large.

As Aaron read this scandalous article the color deserted his cheeks, his hands and mouth trembled, his heart sank within him. What could he say in his defense? Nothing! The deductions and conclusions were false, but the story was true. There was but one answer to the question whether he had perpetrated a domestic fraud, and had brought up as a Jewess a child whom he had allowed to grow up in ignorance of her parentage and rightful faith. This answer would be fatal and would give the impress of truth to the entire article. How could he show himself in public after such an exposure? His intended appearance at the sale to-morrow must be relinquished; he would be pointed at with scorn and contempt. Not for him the open paths where he would meet his fellow-man face to face; he must creep through the byways, close to the wall. It seemed to him as if his life were over. His head drooped, his arms sank listlessly down, his whole appearance was that of a man who had received a mortal stroke.

"It is abominable, abominable!" cried Mr. Moss. "Is there no law to punish such a slander? Is there no protection for such a man as you?"

"For such a man as I?" echoed Aaron sadly. "Ah, my friend, you forget. There is no grave deep

enough for sin and wrongdoing; the punishment meted out to me is just."

"It is not—it is not!"

"Hush! You will disturb Rachel."

He stepped softly into the bedroom; Rachel was slumbering with a smile on her lips. As he stood by her side, contemplating her sweet and beautiful face, she awoke.

"Aaron?"

"Yes, my life."

"Is it late? Has Mr. Moss gone?"

"He is still here, Rachel. It is quite early."

She encircled his neck with her arms, and drew him to her. "I have had such happy dreams, dear love. Some good fortune is going to happen to us."

"What would life be without its delusions?" he said in a sad tone.

"Do not speak so sadly, dear. It is not because we are poor, is it?"

"No, love, it is not that. But if your dreams should not come true——"

"Why, then," she answered, and her voice was like music in his ears, "we have faced trouble before, and can face it again. It will make no difference so long as we are together. God is all-merciful and in him I put my trust. To the last—to the last—dear and honored husband, we will not lose our trust in him. Do not be sad. All will come right—I feel it will. It is as if a divine voice is whispering to me."

When Aaron rejoined his friend the color had returned to his face, his step was firmer, his eye *brighter*.

"There is an angel by my side," he said. "Let my enemies do their worst. I am armed against them. Does this article make any change in our friendship?"

"It binds me closer to you, Cohen."

Aaron pressed Mr. Moss' hand. "Love and friendship are mine," he said simply. "What more can I desire?"

## CHAPTER XLII.

### RETRIBUTION.

THE following morning Aaron went to the office as usual, and quickly discovered that the poisoned arrow had found its mark. He was received with coldness, and the principals of the firm passed his desk without speaking to him. He observed the older employees whispering together, and looking at him furtively, avoiding his eye when he returned their gaze. His mind was soon made up; he would not wait for the dismissal he saw impending, and in an interview with his employers he tendered his resignation.

"You have saved us from a difficulty, Mr. Cohen," they said. "We intended to speak to you before the day was over. But still, if the story we have seen in several papers is not true—if it does not, after all, refer to you——"

"The story is true," he said, "and it refers to me."

"We regret the necessity," was their reply; "the cashier will pay you a month's salary in lieu of notice."

"I can accept only what is due to me," said Aaron; and shortly afterward he left the office.

He did not return home until evening, and then he said nothing to Rachel of his dismissal. The next day he went out and wandered aimlessly about the streets, choosing the thoroughfares where he would be

least likely to be recognized. So the days passed, and still he had not the courage to speak to Rachel.

"Perhaps in another country," he thought, "I may find rest, and Rachel and I will be allowed to pass the remainder of our life in peace."

On Tuesday in the ensuing week he went forth, and with bowed head was walking sadly on when, with a sudden impulse, he wheeled round in the direction of his home. The feeling that impelled him to do this was that he was behaving treacherously to Rachel in keeping the secret from her. He would make her acquainted with his disgrace and dismissal, and never again in his life would he conceal anything from her knowledge. This resolution gave him the courage he had lacked.

"It is as if I were losing faith in her," he murmured. "Love has made me weak where it should have made me strong."

He hastened his steps, and soon reached his home. As he stood for a moment at the door of the sitting room he heard a voice within which he recognized as that of his old rival, Mr. Poynter, and upon his entrance he found that gentleman and his wife together.

Rachel was standing in a dignified attitude, as though in the presence of an enemy; her face was pale and scornful, and Mr. Poynter was manifestly ill at ease. Hearing her husband's footsteps, she extended her hand, and taking his, pressed it to her lips. In this position they must be left for a brief space while an explanation is given of another incident which was to bear directly on the scene, and to bring into it a startling color.



Prissy had conducted Mr. Poynter into the presence of her mistress, and had scarcely done so when she was called down to a lady who had come to see Mr. and Mrs. Cohen. This lady was Mrs. Gordon.

"I bring good news to your master and mistress," she said to Prissy after she had heard that Mrs. Cohen was engaged. "Can I wait until the visitor is gone?"

"You can sit in my room if you don't mind, ma'am," said Prissy, who was greatly excited at the promise of good news.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Gordon, and she followed the servant upstairs to a room next to that in which Mr. Poynter and Rachel were conversing, and where, the wall being thin, she could hear every word that was being spoken in the adjoining apartment.

"This gentleman," said Rachel to her husband, pointing in the direction of Mr. Poynter, "has called to see you on business, and has taken advantage of your absence to offer me a bribe."

"One moment, Rachel," said Aaron; "let me first hear the nature of Mr. Poynter's business."

"I will explain it," said Mr. Poynter. "I have not been fortunate enough to win Mrs. Cohen's favor, but ladies are not accustomed to discuss business matters. You are down in the world, Mr. Cohen. It is best to speak quite plainly."

"It is. I am, as you say, down in the world."

"The newspapers," continued Mr. Poynter, "have been saying uncomplimentary things of you, and I have heard of a threat of further revelation. I considered it my duty to make your wife acquainted with these public disclosures."

Rachel pressed her lips again upon Aaron's hand which she held in a firm and loving grasp. His face brightened.

"You have rendered me a service," he said. "Possibly I have to thank you, also, for the statements which have been made in the papers concerning me?"

"Possibly," said Mr. Poynter.

"Nay," said Aaron, "you said just now that it is best to speak quite plainly. Have I, or have I not, to thank you for the unfavorable publicity?"

"I have never shrunk from the truth," replied Mr. Poynter with a lofty air, "nor from a duty, however distressing the truth or the duty might be. I became possessed of certain information, and I considered it my duty, in the interests of truth, not to withhold it from the public ear."

"I thank you. Perhaps you will now come straight to the business which brings you here."

"It is very simple, and will put money into your pocket, of which, it seems to me, you stand in need."

"I do stand in need of money."

"Then the matter can be arranged. Some little while since you transferred your contracts to other firms, ignoring me entirely in the transaction."

"For which," said Aaron, "I had good reasons, and for which you have taken your revenge."

"God-fearing men," said Mr. Poynter, "do not seek revenge, but justice. To continue. The firm to which you transferred the most important of these contracts happen, at the present time, to need some assistance, and hearing of it I offer what they need. But it appears that you have hampered them, and that in the

deed of transference you expressly stipulated that no part of the contracts shall be executed by me unless I bind myself to a scale of wages and hours which you have tabulated."

"I considered it fair to the men," said Aaron, "and it is as you have stated."

"It is my belief," pursued Mr. Poynter, "that the firm will accept my aid if I adhere to the scale, which I decline to do. I know what is right, and I will not be dictated to. My business here is to make you the offer of a sum of money—I will go as far as a hundred pounds—if you will cancel this stipulation by which my friends are bound. A hundred pounds would come in useful to you just now."

"It would. It is likely you would increase the sum."

"Oh, you Jews, you Jews?" exclaimed Mr. Poynter jocosely, thinking he had gained his point. "Always on the lookout for the main chance—always screwing out the last penny. I wouldn't mind, Mr. Cohen. We will say a hundred and twenty."

Aaron turned to Rachel and asked, "Is this the bribe you spoke of?"

"It is not," she replied. "Mr. Poynter will explain it to you in his own words."

"I haven't the smallest objection," said Mr. Poynter. "You see, Mr. Cohen, it is sometimes necessary to put the screw on. Who knows that better than you? There is a material screw, and a moral screw, in this particular case. The material screw is money; the moral screw is an iron safe, of which, as yet, no mention has been made in the newspapers."

"Ah," said Aaron.

"It is almost a waste of words to speak of it to you, who are so familiar with the circumstances. This iron safe, it appears, was given into your charge when you received the infant into your house in Gosport. You were poor at the time, and from that day you prospered. In a manner of speaking, you became suddenly rich. Well, well, the temptation was too strong for you. You could not resist opening the safe, and appropriating what it contained—undoubtedly treasure of some sort in money or jewels. But, Mr. Cohen, there is an All-seeing Eye."

"I acknowledge it. In the event of my refusing your money you threaten to accuse me through the columns of the press of breaking open the safe and stealing its contents."

"You have expressed it clearly, Mr. Cohen. The moral screw, you know."

"Mr. Poynter," said Aaron with dignity, "I refuse your offer."

"It is not enough?"

"Were you to multiply it a hundred times it would not be enough."

Through Aaron's veins ran the sweet approval conveyed in Rachel's cold clasp upon his hand.

"You beggar!" exclaimed Mr. Poynter. "You hypocrite! You defy me?"

"You rich man," said Aaron, "you God-fearing man, do you worst."

"It shall be done," cried Mr. Poynter furiously. "You are ruined: I will ruin you still more; I will bring you to your knees; you shall lie in the gutter,

and beg for mercy ! You paragon of sanctity, all the world shall know you for what you are ! ”

“ You can use no harsher words,” said Aaron. “ Relieve me now of your presence.”

As he said this the communicating door between the rooms opened and Mrs. Gordon appeared on the threshold.

“ Yes, I will go,” said Mr. Poynter; but fell back when Mrs. Gordon advanced.

“ Not yet,” she said; and turning to Aaron, “ I have a word to say to this gentleman. Your servant admitted me and allowed me to wait in the adjoining apartment till you were disengaged. I have heard all that has passed between you, and I am thankful for the chance that enabled me to do so. Mr. Cohen, look upon that man and mark how changed he is, from braggart to coward. It is not the infamous falsehoods he has spoken, it is not the cowardly threats to which he has dared to give utterance in the presence of a lady that causes him to shrink, that blanches his face, and brings terror into his eyes. It is because he sees me stand before him, the woman he betrayed and deserted long years ago. He believed me dead, driven to death by his treachery and baseness; he beholds me living, to cover him, if I wish, with shame and ignominy. Heaven knows I had no desire to seek him, but Heaven directed me here in a just moment to expose and baffle him. It is my turn now to threaten, it is my turn to dictate. You unutterable villain, you shall make some sort of retribution for the infamy of the past ! ”

“ Psha ! ” said Mr. Poynter with white lips. “ Who will believe you ? You have no proofs.”

"I have; God's justice has turned your weapon against yourself. The safe intrusted to this noble gentleman, and which he delivered intact, untampered with, when I came to claim it, contained no treasure in money or jewels. When I parted with my child—and yours—I was too poor to deposit even one silver coin in it, but in its stead I placed there the torn half of one of your letters, retaining the other portion in proof of its genuineness. This letter is now in my possession. How would you stand in the eyes of the world if I published this, you God-fearing man, with the story attaching to it? I will do it, as Heaven is my judge, if you do not repair the injury you have done this gentleman, whom, with all my heart and soul, I honor and revere. It is him you have to thank that your child has been reared in honor and virtue. Go; I never wish to look upon your face again, but as you are a living man I will bring the good name you falsely bear to the dust if you do not make reparation!"

As he slunk past her, uttering no word, she held her dress so that it should not come in contact with him. His power for evil was at an end, and Aaron had nothing more to fear from his malice.

Then, after Aaron had introduced her to Rachel, she poured glad tidings into their ears. She had not sought them earlier, she said, because she wished first to execute a plan which was in her head respecting them, and she had also to reconcile Lord Storndale to his son's marriage with Ruth.

Her great wealth had enabled her, after much labor, to succeed in this endeavor, and Ruth was recognized by her husband's family. The fortune which Aaron

had settled upon Ruth had not been used in the carrying out of her desire; it was deposited in the bank, where only Aaron's signature was needed to prove his right to it.

And now she begged them to accompany her; she wished to show them something, and her carriage was at the door.

It conveyed them to a handsome house in a good neighborhood, and Aaron's heart throbbed with gratitude as he saw in it all the memorials of his old home which he and Rachel held dear.

On the walls were the portraits of himself and Rachel which had been presented to him on the day when all his friends had assembled to do him honor. Happy tears ran down Rachel's face as Aaron walked with her through the rooms and described their contents. In the study he paused, lifted something from the table, and placed it in Rachel's hands.

"Your silver-mounted pipe," she exclaimed.

"My silver-mounted pipe," he answered. "My life, with this pipe and the dear picture of yourself sitting beneath the cherry tree, and holding your dear hand, I could go through the world in perfect happiness and content."

"O Lord of the Universe," said Rachel, clasping her hands, and lifting her lovely face, "I thank thee humbly for all thy goodness to me and mine!"

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**THE END.**









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